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ON THE COVER: One of our favorite artists (and our absolutely favorite T-shirt artist) Ray VanTilburg made this special shirt for our September cover depicting a scene from the battle at the Ravens Bluff city walls. He also made a wonderful full color version of the T-shirt for purchase at the Game Fair. We've got some left in most sizes (for $17 U.S. funds–includes postage and handling) if you'd like to order one of your very own. Order direct from HQ at the Network's U.S. address below.

If you'd like to talk to Ray about a custom T-shirt (he does the most amazing work), write to: Off-World Designs, 317 Bolingbrook, IL 60440. He does great convention shirts, too.

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Got News?
Share it with us!
Send your scoop to "NEWScene" at the Network's address!

NEWScene

Role Playing for Famine Relief

This year sees the tenth DrakCon in Glasgow, Scotland and the tenth anniversary of the event that started it all—Dragon Aid.

In 1986 a group in London, led by Liz Holiday, decided that members of the role-playing hobby should respond to the successful efforts of Band Aid and Live Aid to raise funds for relief of the dreadful situation in Africa. They sponsored a successful attempt to set a world record for continuous AD&D® game play, and put out a fanzine calling on other gamers to join in with their own events.

On holiday I picked up a copy of the fanzine, came home and asked the staff of the local game shop what they thought. Within a few hours I was being interviewed by local radio and newspapers. Letters were sent to games companies, soft drink firms, paper manufacturers, etc.

Three short weeks later, we had a hall at Aberdeen University, reams of high quality glossy paper, clingfilm, a promise of trophies and several pounds of pate'. The local ODEON came to the rescue with the use of a card for a local wholesaler and a sale or return order of Coke, etc. on our behalf. We were on our way.

That first event started with a 36-hour sponsored marathon followed by a night's rest. The next day we re-opened for a weekend of gaming including a three round AD&D tournament. Despite small attendance numbers, we raised £600.

Eight months or so later, I started getting asked when I was going to hold another event. The organizers of the original Dragon Aid event decided not to repeat, but we kept it alive as an organization. We did have to come up with a new name. After various suggestions and dreadful puns we settled on DrakCon—to include Fantasy (Dragon!), Horror (Dracula!) and SF (the Drak from *Enemy Mine*). We found a regular venue, and it became an annual event.

Over the last ten years DrakCon has raised almost £14,000 for famine relief and built a reputation as one of the most friendly and fun events of its type. We would like to thank all those who have supported us over the last ten years and hope that many of you will be able to join us in the next ten.

—Sandy Douglas
oj57@dial.pipex.com

Network Awards

This year at the Game Fair's Wednesday night membership meeting, the Network awarded service awards to many of the Network's loyal volunteers. These service awards represent our appreciation to all Network members who helped other members during the year.

Four tournament authors were inducted into the Network's "10 Tournament" Club for their contributions to the tournament library. Those honored were: Brandon Amancio, Glen R. Goodwin, Christopher B. Ravlin, and Douglas Smith. One of our most prolific authors, Daniel S. Donnelly, was inducted into the "20-Tournament" Club.

The following members received Service Medals:

George Aber
Sherrie Miller
Leonard Dessert
Todd Smart
Ken Richart
Eugene Luster
Tom Hammerschmitt
Cisco Lopez-Fresquet
Ed Gibson
Glenn Smith
Chris McGuigan
Todd Laing
Shaun Horner
Jake Brunette
Wayne Straiton
Surekha Chate
Carol Clarkson
Wellston Clark
Dave Sutherland
John A.T. Vaccaro
Jay Fisher

Two members, David Conant and Don Weatherbee, received special plaques in appreciation of special technical services they've provided to make certain that the Network runs smoother. These are known as "Above and Beyond Awards."

A special appreciation award was made to David Samuels, Linda Baldwin, and the rest of New York City's Knights of the Empire Network club, for dedicated service to the community at large, and to other Network members.

Finally, an award was presented for years of dedicated service to one of the Network's "godparents," Harold Johnson.

—Scott Douglas
RPGAHQ@aol.com

Gamer's Choice Awards

Gamer's Choice ballots were counted in late July, and the winners were announced at the Game Fair. Over 30,000 ballots were printed in the Newszine and in DUNGEON® Adventures magazine.

Best Family Game
Sim City: The Card Game
Mayfair Games

Best New Role-Playing Game
Mage: the Ascension
2nd Edition
White Wolf Games Studio

Best Fantasy Accessory
BIRTHRIGHT®
TSR, Inc.

Best Science-Fiction Role-Playing Game
Paranoia 5th Edition
West End Games

Best Historical Game
1856
Mayfair Games

Best Science-Fiction/ Fantasy Strategy Game
The Hobbit
Iron Crown Enterprises

Best Card Game
Shadowfist
Daedelus Games

Best Card Game Supplement
Power Surge–Overpower
Fleer

Best Computer Game
Warcraft II
Blizzard Entertainment

Best Game Magazine
Shadis
Alderac Entertainment

Favorite Game Master
Jean Rabe

Favorite Tournament
The Fourth Wish
The PM Players

The Network congratulates these worthy winners.

Apparently, the letters page struck a repsonsive chord in everyone. You're telling me you want a letters page every issue. Let it be so. Now you must continue to write fascinating and entertaining letters such as these:

Hello RPGA, POLYHEDRON People:

I like: letters every month. Roger Moore's column. Convention listings. Articles and adventures for non-AD&D games. If you print AD&D adventures, I prefer one-shot adventures that can be tailored to any campaign.

I don't like: Forgotten Deities. That "o" falling out of our magazine's logo. I like to see LIVING CITY™ coverage (like shops & NPCs) but not too much.

What I would really (really) like (very much), is discussion between members in a published forum. We could exchange campaign ideas, or tell what we think of the LIVING CITY, or tell embarassing anecdotes about Scott, or why we like (or dislike) conventions, or why we're in the RPGA if we don't go to conventions, or do our own product reviews/plugs, or give tips on member recruitment, or discuss why 3rd Edition is better than 2nd, or tell us about Belgian cons, or tell about our campaign with no rules, or no experience points, or how to be scary, or how to run a scary *Chill* game, or the Endanger Species RPG we're working on, or the R&D gadgets we came up with for *Paranoia*, or how to game with kids, or our experiences as a physically challenged gamer, or the best color for POLYHEDRON, or the soundtrack we recorded for *Ars Magica*, or why we should use any of those dozens of books that TSR publishes, or why we hate wargamers, or anything. No, really, anything—as long as it relates to *R*ole *P*laying *G*aming. I'll bet that there's someone besides me who has a short article to submit that won't fill up a whole page.

Think about it—a big part of what we all like about POLYHEDRON (or any gaming magazine) is: ideas. Number 120 had six articles—six sets of ideas by six people. Now add eight letters from eight more people. Much better, eh?

Which brings me to part 2. I think one way you could expand membership is to appeal to the non-conventioneer. This forum would definitely help. Aside from that I can't think of many (reasonable) ideas, but I'm sure someone can.

Kevin S. Hansen
Grafton, WI

I don't really like that "o" falling out of the logo either.

Dear Jeff and HQ staff:

First off, Hurray for Des Garrett's forthright comments on the Newszine, competition deadlines, and other stuff. Almost everything he said has been mentioned to me by our SW Pacific members and been passed on to Scott (and even Jean) in the past. It is great to know we're not alone down here in thinking LIVING CITY is a waste of space, and deadlines are too short for us non-US residents.

Secondly, Erik Benson's comments on killing off LIVING CITY. YES, PLEASE. I was involved in the initial working groups to get LIVING CITY sorted out, and was disappointed in the petty politicking that went on when what was needed was some serious changes in direction—so I gave up. To be fair, there are a few people who are trying very hard to make LIVING CITY work, but the inertia that the campaign has developed is too strong now to be altered. Just look at the complaints from members when changes to allowed classes, and keeping track of magic items, were looked at by HQ. No, I'm afraid the only way to save RAVENS BLUFF is to nuke it from orbit and (maybe) rebuild on the rubble (Hmm, LIVING™ GAMMA WORLD®).

To further emphasise my point here, look at LIVING JUNGLE, LIVING DEATH, and Virtual Seattle. All are convention campaigns for members, and all have learned from the mistakes of LIVING CITY. Many of the problems of LIVING CITY have been specifically excluded from these other campaigns. Just as many RPGs have been replaced by later editions, it's time to let LIVING JUNGLE, LIVING DEATH, and Virtual Seattle replace LIVING CITY.

Finally, welcome aboard, Jeff. Your column in issue 120 was certainly interesting. I'll be very interested to see how long you are permitted to maintain that "not TSRPGA" notion if you want to keep your job, but for all our sakes, I hope it's a long time. BUT, for heaven's sake get a spell checker! "letters have been edited for brvty" Aargh!

"Uncle" Wes Nicholson
RPGA Branch Manager
SW Pacific

See, that "brvty" thing was a joke, Wes. You know, I made the word "brevity" brief? Stay on your toes, man.

Jeff:

Sorry, but I disagree with your analysis of what POLYHEDRON should be for.

I am a Con Man. I enjoy taking my two young sons to several conventions each year. My boys and I eagerly await the arrival of the POLYHEDRON each month to read about the happenings of RAVENS BLUFF and the upcoming cons.

The primary, and I believe only way, to get POLYHEDRON is to enroll in RPGA. Many of us in RPGA are convention-going people. The ones that have their subscription to POLYHEDRON lapse are those that are no longer doing the convention thing. I believe, therefore, that the majority of active and long-term readers of POLYHEDRON are convention people, regardless if they respond or are heard in the magazine. It only makes sense.

There are a number of other magazines published for gamers and RPG folks. This is the only one that I know of for RPGA Network members. Let's not kill the overall thrust of this magazine from the con people to the RPG folks. In fact, let's have more information on conventions. There are many conventions that are not even in the POLYHEDRON.

I want a source of information on the RPGA network and this is supposed to be that source. Do not eliminate or decrease our only choice for that information.

Toe-She
Rick Vogel, Michigan

Anyone agree or disagree with Rick?

To Whom it may concern,

Well I got my POLYHEDRON again this month, and must say that I was angered beyond belief by the letter from Eric Benson. To keep it short, he blames the

whole problem with Roll and Role (notice spelling) playing in the RPGA today on the LIVING CITY and its players.

Eric Benson has a list of complaints about the system. His main concern however, is the lack of role playing and the players' attitudes about "killer modules." I play and judge LIVING CITY, and I know that there are problems. I agree with Eric that most of the players don't role-play, but I know why that happens. The current LIVING CITY modules offer rewards for completing the module, NOT FOR ROLE PLAYING. If the people that write these modules and the editors started putting emphasis on, and actually rewarding the role playing aspect, then I am sure most players would do so.

I started playing LIVING CITY because I believed it was a great medium to interact with other players of caliber with a PC that I was actually interested in playing. On many an occasion, my LIVING CITY group barely left the first encounter before the alloted time for the slot was over. The best part though was that I got away from the standard RPGA module format where the prankster halfling or gnome thief was guaranteed to be the only character to be remembered.

But I soon discovered that if I wanted to get the XPs and magic that everybody else had from the LIVING CITY modules, I needed to seriously tone down the role-playing, and concentrate on actually finishing the module. I had to strike a balance in this respect, and while I miss the pure role playing, I also believe that a player that can balance both role and roll playing is a better player overall.

Then there are the killer modules. There seem to be a group of authors out there that use the approach that their PCs will not have to face the danger, so they will make the module as deadly as possible. These people are the ones that are doing the most to ruin the game. While I am not asking that LIVING CITY modules be cake walks, I do wish to point out that some (Mad Wizard Ren, House Cleaning, and many others) are basically killers.

Eric's basic solution to the problem is that the whole LIVING CITY system be scrapped (this is something I believe the RPGA Network has been trying hard to do themselves). This seems to be the approach to anything that one doesn't approve of these days. Most TV shows and movies are too violent... let's ban them. Role-playing games promote unbalanced behavior... let's get rid of gaming. Grading students in school will hurt their self-esteem... let's not have grades. GET MY DRIFT?

If Mr. Benson has a problem with the LIVING CITY system and its players, then he can simply opt not to judge or play the LIVING CITY events. I did the same in regards to the LIVING JUNGLE. The RPGA section of most conventions offers plenty of other alternatives for those that don't want to do LIVING CITY.

Sincerely,

Alex Lombardi
Columbia, CT

To HQ:

Congratulations, you are doing a good job!

I'm one of the people who can't go to conventions; I live too far and I can't afford the travel from here just to play in a convention (but I love to do it). Now I'm very happy about the changes you want to make for our benefit.

The people who live in foreign countries or (for many reasons) don't go to the many events the RPGA has, only receive the POLYHEDRON Newszine. Adventures in POLYHEDRON are a good start, but there are other things. Keep in mind that we receive POLYHEDRON a month later, and sometimes it doesn't arrive. For this reason, we are always late in the news, and sometimes miss information and have less time to make suggestions. There are other types of contests where the members can join by mail, to elect something, for example, the best monster of the year, or anything you can imagine. The idea is for all members to have the same opportunities to win. I live too far to have the pleasure to play with you face to face, but there are many forms of contact. The RPGA must use them all.

I would like more RPGA information about others, in my case, South Americans. Probably all the members who live in the same country (or near ones) would like to contact each other. There isn't enough space in POLYHEDRON to do it, I know, but the RPGA could designate a member for each country or zone. I know, you are going to talk about Regional Directors, but no one is really close to us.

I love RPGs and have many friends who play in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Perú. All of them tell me the same problems: in South America, RPGs are little-known (but numbers of players are growing), the games are expensive (taxes, transport, etc.) and are limited to those the Editorials want to bring. And of course, they have no idea about RPGs, and so on.

Probably we are a few, and any attempt to make things easier for us is too expensive, or too complicated. I understand all these problems. But I would like you to know I'm very happy to be a member anyway, and I'll always be here to help if I can. Thank you very much.

Yours faithfully,

Alejandro Poli
Santiago, Chile

Dear POLYHEDRON:

Like most people, I have some concerns about LIVING CITY. Mostly that it's become formulaic and rewards power gaming.

I can, however, propose a solution: empower the judges. RPGA judges are our front line in the war over power gaming, over/under rewarding players, encouraging good role-playing, and providing the "campaign" feel that LIVING CITY was supposed to create.

Give judges the latitude to increase/decrease combat encounters, experience/cash rewards, and to reward behavior outside of the hack & slash mode. When was the last time a player was rewarded for heroism, generosity, nobility, wisdom, or cleverness? Chances are if it's not outlined in the module description, most judges are afraid to improvise.

Obviously, this can open a Pandora's box of problems. And we gamers are a vocal bunch when things don't go our way. RPGA HQ, with assistance from the members, should develop and provide a list of guidelines for judges to follow and give each judge one training class in standards of practice. Most judges, empowered with good guidelines and the freedom to make their own decisions, will then be equipped to deal with problems effectively on the spot before they become endemic to our association.

Your thoughts, esteemed colleages of the association?

Frank Gerkins
Washington, DC

So, go on, colleagues. Blow off some esteem on any topic mentioned here, ar anything else that occurs to you. I read all the mail addressed to POLYHEDRON. Even the kooky stuff. So write me:

POLYHEDRON Newszine
201 Sheridan Springs Rd.
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

or email at: polyhedron@aol.com

Do it now.

—Jeff

A Few of Our Favorite Things

by Skip Williams

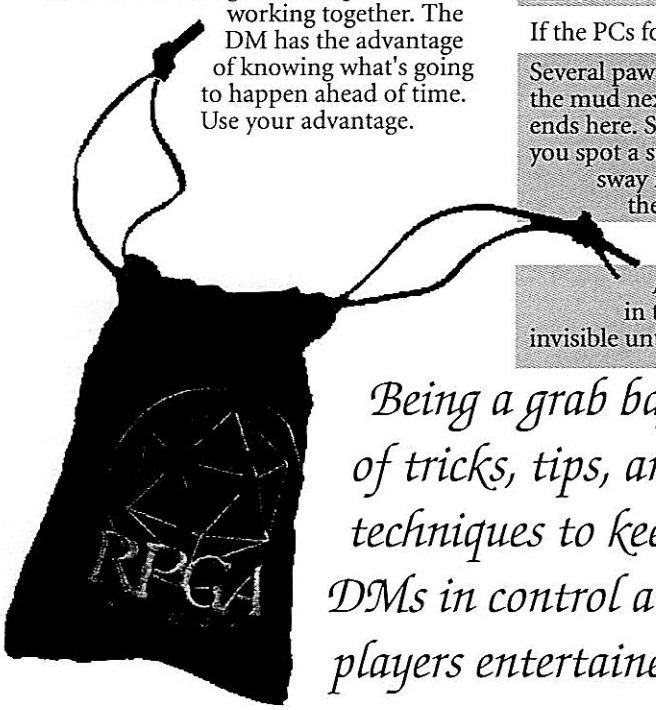
At the '96 GEN CON® Game Fair, some of TSR's finest gaming minds sat as the panel of a seminar: "What's a DM to Do?" Our own Scott, who was volunteered to be one of those minds, showed me the handout the seminar attendees were given. We all know good article ideas when they fall on us. For those of you who didn't get a chance to attend the seminar (or take copious notes), here is the first installment by RPGA Network staff alumnus, Skip "Sage" Williams.

Handling Players

Remember that you can **always** get players to do exactly what you want them to do. The trick is to do so in a way that conceals your manipulations. Concealment is important because you don't want players to become dispirited or resentful. (You're running your game for the players to enjoy, right?)

Here's how:

• **Plan ahead.** In the battle of wits between DM and players, the players have the advantage of multiple minds working together. The DM has the advantage of knowing what's going to happen ahead of time. Use your advantage.



Being a grab bag of tricks, tips, and techniques to keep DMs in control and players entertained

• **Manipulate sparingly.** Don't base every adventure or every encounter within an adventure on a single character action.

• **Always let the players think what** they're doing is their own idea. Never mandate thoughts or actions (many pros break this rule, but that doesn't mean you should). Tell the players what their characters hear, feel, see, touch, and taste and let them go from there.

For example, if you've set up an encounter where a group of lycanthrope hunters attack an innocent man and then have to face the music, don't do this:

> You see and filthy looking man skulking around in the rushes near the stream. His tattered clothes probably got that way when he changed into lycanthrope form last night. This could be the werewolf you seek!

Do this:

> A nasty stench leads you to the shredded carcass of a sheep. Not a single bone remains unbroken in the gory carcass. Crimson tracks lead from the site of the kill toward a brook.

If the PCs follow the tracks:

> Several paw prints are clearly visible in the mud next to the water, but the trail ends here. Slightly upstream, however, you spot a stand of reeds. The reed tops sway now and then, even through there isn't a hint of a breeze.

If the PCs investigate:

> A filthy looking man squats in the reeds. He was nearly invisible until you came upon him. He holds a tattered shirt in his hands. He rubs the shirt on a submerged rock, them hold it up. The man grimaces as he observes a crimson stain upon the shirt's breast.

Of course, the man is no lycanthrope, he has been out berry picking and got his shirt stained.

• **Give your players plenty of different** chances to do the "right" thing. Don't just throw a single opportunity at them and hope it sticks. If the party in the previous example didn't attack the man washing his clothes, perhaps the group also encounters a poacher who's hiding several deer carcasses (his neighbors note that he frequently goes out at night and sure acts suspiciously), and a couple of kids out making wolf tracks (with pebbles and stacks attached to their shoes). The party might find the trail and follow it right to the kids.

• **Many players can't resist an action if** they think the action is something you don't want them to do. "Please don't throw me into that briar patch Mr. Fox!" You want the characters to pull a certain lever? Put a "Don't Pull" sign on it and see what happens.

• **Stress the embarrassing** and inconvenient over the deadly. Overall, it's better to trick players into jumping into a cesspool than to trick them into jumping into a volcano. For example, if the party attacks the man washing his clothes, either make him tough enough to withstand the assault (perhaps he's the local patriarch) or find a way to end the fight quickly (perhaps the man faints when attacked).

• **Liberally salt your adventures with** entertaining characters and minor treasures that PCs can find if they poke around a little. If your group grows accustomed to gaining small rewards for doing the unusual, they'll be much more willing to play along when you start dropping hints about what they should do.

There were lots of great DMs on the panel, and we're expecting to print some tips from PLANESCAPE® setting designer Monte Cook in October. In future months, we plan on getting useful hints from lots of professionals.

But what about you?

Do you have some great ideas about how to DM? Send your ideas to: "A Few of Our Favorite Things" at the Network address. Who knows? You might be the next great mind to appear here!

The Border Kingdoms

Elminster's Everwinking Eye

The Grand Duchy of Shantal

by Ed Greenwood

The everchanging Border Kingdoms continue to beckon; the more Elminster reveals of them, the more I want to go, seeking wild adventure. We last looked at Gallard, a less than enticing spot that is nevertheless the best place to hire guards, purchase hardware, and fence stolen goods. This time around we're right back into the heart of waiting splendor and danger, as we visit The grand Duchy of Shantal.

The Grand Duchy of Shantal

Some folk call this "the heart of the Border Kingdoms," not just because it's centrally located in the tamer western half of the region, but because it's almost stereotypical of these realms: bucolic beauty, eccentric rulership, and lurking danger.

The Grand Duchy today is a tranquil-seeming broad valley of gently rolling farmlands studded with woodlots, flanked to east and west by lightly wooded hills, and crisscrossed by winding lanes. At its center rises the triple-spired Duchal Towers, surrounded by a neat ring of cottages that make up the village of Shantal. These in turn are encircled by a road, and beyond it lie long, narrow vegetable gardens that end in orchards, one for each cottage, radiating outwards like the spokes of a wheel.

It's a curiously neat and ordered settlement for the Border Kingdoms, and the impression of alert, tidy authority is further enchanced by the ever-present mounted patrols of "Vigilant Bailiffs:" capable-looking warriors, armed with crossbows, swords, javelins, and throwing nets.

The alert visitor will notice additional items of interest: visiting mages acquire patrol escorts at all times; there don't seem to be any priests or mages; and almost all villagers are well-armed and look like retired warriors (in fact, they are).

The reasons for these things must be discovered by most visitors, as there seems to be a curious silence around the Border realms as to the history of Shantal.

The Grand Duchy was founded three generations ago by Pelindar Slendyn, the last warrior-servant of the archmage known as the Arcanauh, after a duel that destroyed the Arcanauh, his Red Tower, and his bitter foe, the Thayan sorceress Ithcatra Llumen. Present-day Shantal stands on the former site of the Red Tower.

Pelindar forbade the use of magic in his land, as did his son Thaerin during his rule. Repeated incursions by hostile wizards interested in the unique after-effects of the duel made the establishment of an Official Mage necessary early in the reign of the current Grand Duke, Orsarr Slendyn (NG hm F10), a burly, fun-loving adventurer who reluctantly retired upon the death of his father.

Orsarr tried to convince his adventuring companion, the battered old sorceress Athamundra Rildar of Zazesspur, to come to Shantal and be his mage, but she sent her daughter instead. Orsarr found that his Official Mage was a beautiful lady who

stood almost seven feet tall with flame-orange hair, sparkling green eyes, and a temper more fierce than the worst fall storms.

Flyndara Rildar gave him wards to protect his lands, and the promise to defend them from any severe attack, then called on magical aid to raise herself a tower, and vanished within to pursue her studies. She gave orders that she was not to be disturbed unless the safety of the Duchy was at stake, mentioned that she might spend some time touring other planes, and vanished, only to be seen again on rare occasions, when she walks in unannounced at evening feasts half-dressed, her hair tangled and matted, and falls on food like a starving prisoner. Visitors aren't welcome at her tower, particularly would-be apprentices. There is rumor in the Duchy that Flyndara skulks about the Grand Duke's lands in animal shape, watching for thieves, and hunting the prey of whatever shape she's currently using. (There are also rumors that she's ordered the Grand Duke not to marry, because he will be her mate when she feels ready to bear a daughter to pass her magic to.)

Whatever the truth about the Official Mage's sanity or marital intentions, it is certain that one three occasions she's blasted intruding mages to dust—no less than a Red Wizard of Thay, a Halruaan archmage of senior years, and a Zhentarim of rising reputation. It is rumored that Flyndara has prevailed through a combination of reckless indignity, strange spells, and multiple artifacts.

Those artifacts are a topic whispered about in the Grand Duchy (by one local to another, never to outsiders), because the use of multiple artifacts in battle is widely rumored to have been the cause of the explosion that destroyed the Red Tower and its battling occupants—and left the Daerndar the way it is today.

The Daerndar, a series of caverns, lies under the Duchal Towers now. Some say they are what has driven the Official Mage mad. Indisputably they are why so many wandering mages show up in the Grand Duchy, "nosing around."

Why would anyone want to get into the Daerndar? We'll get to that soon enough, Elminster told me: first, a word or two about the Duchy and its wards. It's true that you'll find no priests in the valley except a handful of Battleforges of Tempus who dwell in the Duchal Towers, and administer to spiritual and healing needs of the Vigilant Bailiffs, the Grand Duke, and (upon request, and in return for promises not to contest the Grand Duke's authority or his Bailiffs, and not to attempt to reach the Daerndar, or support any mage in doing so) any visiting warriors who worship the Lord of Battles.

It's also true that a majority of Duchy residents are retired (or semi-retired) warriors, who gladly dwell in a home free of hostile magic. Most volunteer for occasional duty as Vigilant Bailiffs, and spend the rest of their time as farmers and craftworkers, producing such things as their own "improved" designs for helms, shields, and bracers (which tend to be non-reflective, rust-resistant pieces fitted with dagger-sheaths and coin pouches).

The Shantan farmers grow mixed vegetables for their own use and keep livestock; they produce for export a smoky-flavored dark beer known as "Old Oakey", cheese, sausage, and hams. Most sell from covered carts at their gates, or the traveler can stop at The Roping Post hardware store, across from the main gates of the Duchal Towers, and buy from a wide selection of local produce. The proprietress, Analytha Kroanarl, is a cheerful, bustling soul who knows everyone in the valley, and will discuss everything except the Official Mage and the Daerndar.

The wards created by the Official Mage (though some locals believe she merely awakened and modified wards created earlier by the Arcanauh—and there is general agreement that they must be powered by some secret artifact) prohibit the following spells from operating within the Duchy: teleport, dimension door, and all other known translocation magics; invisibility and all other illusion/phantasm magics that affect the true appearance of a living being; and all magical fire (including dragon breath). They will force the cessation of ongoing effects that try to enter the Duchy (i.e. a disguised mage riding into the valley will lose his magical disguise. One teleporting in would find an abrupt end to his journey at the outside border of the wards). The wards add a prohibition against all magical lightning and electrical discharge magics, as well as *web* and *hold person* spells within the ring road that surrounds the cottages of Shantal. They may have other, unrevealed effects. It is rumored that within the Duchal Towers, cold-based magics are negated, and all shapechanging beings—such as lycanthropes and doppelgangers—are forced through a slow, continual cycle of all of the shapes they customarily employ.

And with such lore out of the way, Elminster told me at last about the Daerndar, an extensive natural series of caverns that the Arcanauh had broken into and used as storage cellars, spell-casting chambers, and hiding places for strong magic.

There's said to be a single secret way down into the Daerndar—a flooded tunnel that a swimmer must know well, or perish in dead-end side-ways for lack of air. It allegedly descends from somewhere in the Official Mage's tower (from under her bed, local legend insists, but this may be a storyteller's embellishment that gained credence through retelling).

The explosion that destroyed the archmage and his artifacts imbued the caves with a magical radiation—fed, some say, by the continuing discharges of ruptured artifacts whose magic has been twisted horribly awry. Those who've seen the caverns speak of blue-green glowing mists drifting about them—mists that are home to at least three doomspheres ('ghost beholders' detailed fully in *The Ruins of Undermountain* boxed set). It is not known what attitude these undead have to intruders who don't attack them (they are known to battle those who do), but at least one adventurer who fled from Shantal insists that the Vigilant Bailiffs his adventuring band fought on the

northern borders of the Duchy were able to summon one of the doom-spheres to fight for them!

The Daerndar hold such a great attraction for mages Realms-wide because these radiations are strong enough to recharge many magical items for those who know the right spells to focus and infuse. (Elminster spoke of a single guiding ritual causing a wand of magic missiles to gain 4d12 charges—but warned that most uses of the radiation gain far more modest benefits. Rods and staves, for example, seem to require a spell per charge gained.)

Those who do not know the proper spells are warned that most spell use in the Daerndar causes chain-reaction outbursts of wild magic! In consultation with Elminster, I've provided a random table of possible effects for the use of a DM doing things "on the run," but creating specific effects before play begins is preferable.

Daerndar Effects Table (d10)

01: *teleport without error* on a single (random) being. This spontaneous expulsion is the sole manner in which any translocation magic will function in the Daerndar (with one exception, noted hereafter)—and it is a one-way trip out of the caverns to ten feet above the nearest roof, tree, or patch of ground at some random spot in Shantal. The affected being simply appears in midair, stripped of all clothing, gear, and items (all of which remain behind in the caverns). Villagers don't tend to be all that sympathetic to such arrivals, though they won't be actively hostile unless attacked; they tend to direct naked adventurers to the (unsympathetic, tending to require services in return for his aid) Grand Duke. Mages who attempt their own teleport without error spells in the Daerndar are warned that the usual result is that a (random type of) monster is teleported into the caverns, to attack the caster—and that sometimes the mage and another being anywhere in Faerûn (of the same race but extremely young, different gender and unable to cast spells) instantly exchange bodies.
02: unseen blow is delivered to one (random) target being, equal in effects to one strike of a *Bigby's clenched fist.*
03: *prismatic spray* occurs, from random source and in random direction.
04: *polymorph other* on nearest (or at random) 1d3 living beings into shapes of other beasts—such a change lasting 1d4 turns, but never involving a system shock, a form that can't exist in the Daerndar (i.e. no fish gasping out of water) or chance of remaining in the newly assumed form. Usual shapes adopted include large crabs or horseshoe crabs; cows; giant dew-worms; giant snails; and various sorts of creepers (plant vines).
05: 4d4 *magic missiles* (1d4+1 damage each) fly off in all directions; all present must make Dexterity Checks to avoid these aimlessly swarming bolts.
06: *chain lightning* (9d6; last jump ends in a 4d6 fireball instead of a 1d6 lightning strike).
07: *reverse gravity* (three locations).
08: *flame strike* on a random spot, dying down into a flaming sphere (no extra damage from its formation is suffered by anyone hit by the flame strike) that rolls away in a random direction, but dissipates after 1d3 rounds.
09: *cone of cold* erupts, from random point source and in a random direction.
10: *blade barrier* centered on where the triggering magic was cast (or in a random locale).

In addition to these wild effects, the Daerndar exhibit additional properties that may prove perilous.

I ate the best dragon meat in the Border Kingdoms. Seems a blue dragon attacked some inn, so the proprietress got a wand and blew it apart. She told me she was sick of dragon meat already.

Bleysidarr Bronzehelm
Lord Adventurer of Starmantle
speaking in council
Year of the Sword

From time to time, the caves are lashed by violent, spontaneous spell storms. These often involve explosions, lightning, and other damaging effects—but any spell-users (i.e. all wizards and priests) must make an Intelligence Check for each round of exposure. Failure means that they are *feebleminded.*

At other times (i.e. not during spell storms), a bewildered and belligerent monster appears in the caverns, teleported in by Daerndar magic. Trolls, minotaurs, mimics, ettins, eyewings, and ropers seem to appear most often (and can be randomly generated by d6 roll), but spectral wizards and gibbering mouthers have also been reported.

All magical items brought into the Daerndar float freely—drifting along gently through the mists, or violently if a spell storm erupts—if released and not tethered (i.e. in a sheath). They also project "ghost" images of themselves everywhere, somewhat like a *mirror image* spell. These images (there are typically six or seven) move independently and look identical: touching a false image will betray that it isn't solid, but won't dispel it.

Moreover, the walls of the Daerndar seem to move from time to time, changing the shape of the caves and in at least one case crushing a hapless wizard between closing walls. The radiations block all translocation, scrying, astral, and ethereal spells and spell-like powers (no one can use magic to "jump" into or out of the Daerndar).

The Daerndar may well have other unrevealed properties. They are known to have claimed the lives of over 40 adventurers in the past decade alone.

The Grand Duke has (on two occasions) given his permission for travelers to try to recharge items in the Daerndar—but both occasions have involved a watchful escort from the prickly Official Mage. Other visitors to the caverns have stumbled on secret passages in the Duchal Towers that lead to the route controlled by Flyndara Rildar, and visited on the sly; a few survived to tell the tale—and escaped the subsequent slaying creatures sent by the Official Mage.

Would-be visitors to the Grand Duchy of Shantal are warned that going there to hire warriors or to buy beer or cheese is a far safer calling. For their convenience, the village boasts one combined inn and tavern, which stands beside the The Roping Post , across from the main gates of the Duchal Towers: the Grand Duke's Griffon (Good/Cheap). It's a typical dingy old roadhouse. Don't step on any of its pet toads; they're apt to be mages transformed by Flyndara or the Daerndar, and a mite irascible for it. ❑

A DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ Contest

Fate Deals A New Hand

Chaos Comes to Krynn

by Harold Johnson

"The Gods are Gone!" ...or so the tale is told. We mortals are left alone in a cruel world with only our wits and each other to fend off the destruction of dragons unfettered! Krynn has weathered much since the Chaos War, and though the nations of Ansalon rally and struggle for freedom, the world is much changed and bears the scars of Chaos.

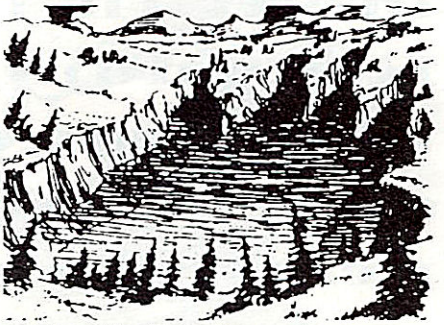
- Lissa Barbre recording the words of the Herald

In the summer of 382 AC the final chapter in the War of the Lance saga was written—Chaos came to Krynn and nearly destroyed our world. The ballads sing of a last battle fought by the world's champions to save the gods and all creation from utter dissolution. When the world awoke from that nightmare Battle of the Rift the gods once again abandoned Krynn, this time to save their creation.

The withdrawal of the gods was just the final signature on Chaos' metamorphoses of this world. Chaos left its mark on Krynn, scarring the land, transforming the beasts, tainting the relics of the land, and breathing danger and destruction into the very life of the world.

Here are examples of some Chaos marks which have been identified:

The Chaos Footprint is a great furrow, a footprint of some gargantuan drake. Those who tread its shadowed canyons and burnt vale feel the chill of Death. Even mighty heroes grow weak with palsy, unable to leave their beds for months. Rumor suggests Chaos left its spoor in this dread divide, a fallen scale, a smear of blood, or a broken talon whose Chaos essence disrupts all sorcery.



The Mindless Drone is a creature whose reason was destroyed by Chaos. This humanoid is the ultimate mimic, duplicating the strongest personality or emotion encountered and exceeding the ability of the model. But the creature lacks discrimination, for instance, when duplicating a warrior's skill it becomes a beserker attacking friend and foe alike. What race the Drone was originally is unknown. Rumors suggest it can adapt its appearance as well.

The Tangled Coil is an armband shaped like a twisted vine. This band can sprout new tendrils to entangle foes or aid in climbing. Beneath the dark of the moon, it bears a bitter black fruit that transforms one into a shadowy wraith for a night. However, those who have possessed the Coil have been led by events into jealousy, corruption and betrayal. Folktales suggest that the Coil may take root in its owner's flesh eventually changing him into a tree.

Winter's Sleep is a glistening veil of snow and ice. Those caught in its path are overwhelmed and fall into a dreamless sleep. Bewitched for weeks, victims may waste away as their sleep consumes their body's fat. Some have even frozen to death.

It is our goal to identify and catalog any Chaos marks left on our world to warn others and provide for the safety of our children. These dark scars blight the land, cripple creatures, curse our kindred, and hide deadly dangers. Your help is required.

Contest Rules

We are looking to catalog all of the marks and changes made on the world of Krynn in Chaos' passing. Since Krynn survived the Battle of the Rift, none of these scars or transformations would be far reaching or have a wide ranging impact on our world. Further, Chaos is opposed to order and none of these changes would be global, racial or broad in scope, exhibiting unique individual effects or combination of effects, presenting exceptions rather than changing standards.

Marks identified thus far have been grouped into the following categories.

- Landmarks, locations, settings;
- Creatures, plants, living things;
- Items, artifacts, curses;
- Phenomena, weather, events.

Other types of Chaos marks may exist, but will not be considered valid submissions.

Each submission for consideration should be presented in the following format: typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins all around. Each page should be numbered and the item's name and the author's name should be typed in the upper right corner. A Standard Disclosure Form is required to accompany each entry. This form appeared in the August issue of the Newszine, and is available for download from the TSR areas on America Online and GEnie, as well as by mailing a SASE to the Network. Winners will receive an autographed collection of brand new DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game products

All submissions become the property of the RPGA Network and TSR, Inc. Use of any submissions will be credited to the original author. Send your submissions to: "Chaos Marks Contest," RPGA Network, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI, 53147.

Deadline: December 31, 1996

All entries **must** be postmarked by this date. Any entries not postmarked by this date will be void. Sorry, we cannot accept emailed or faxed submissions for this contest.

A Wish for Temptation

"Is this her fault or mine?
The tempter or the tempted, who sins the most?"
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

By Glen R. Goodwin
Characters by Robert Wiese

DM Outline

This adventure takes place in the midst of a war between Ravens Bluff and unknown forces under the Warlord Myrkyssa Jelan.

The city's commanders have been informed that enemy forces plan to attack an ally to the north, the small township of Mossbridges. The elders of that town are in quite a tizzy, but Ravens Bluff has pledged it's aid and has placed Commander Nioga of the army in charge.

The PCs are ordered to ride north to Mossbridges in advance of the army, which will follow under General Obespieri. Upon arrival, the PCs meet with Commander Nioga. He sends the party to rest at a nearby inn and promises to send for them shortly.

At the inn, the PCs can relax to the delightful sounds of a bard named Golatian. Once the PCs go to sleep they are awakened by an intruder, Golatian, who delivers a secret message warning the party of impending evil.

The next morning Nioga sends the party to deliver a message. Unsuccessful in their mission, the party returns to Mossbridges only to be set upon by Nioga's own men. The PCs discover that Nioga is working for Warlord Jelan, and has been feeding false information to Ravens Bluff. They also learn that Nioga has fled the town. The PCs report to General Obespieri upon arrival, and are ordered back to Ravens Bluff to warn the city and help prepare its defense.

The PCs return to Ravens Bluff where they discover that Commander Nioga has arrived ahead of them and is on his way to speak with the Commander of the City's Defense Forces, General Therogeon. The PCs rush to the General's office only to discover they are too late—Nioga has assassinated the general and fled the city.

While defending the city in a minor skirmish the PCs spot Golatian who is in need of their aid.

The PCs learn from Golatian that Nioga has transported a mirror of mental prowess into the city and intends to use it as transportation to place the enemy forces inside the city for an attack. Golatian requires the PCs to help him stop the enemy and grab the magic mirror. If the PCs capture the mirror, Golatian can use it in conjunction with the military's High Sorcerer to transport the Ravens Bluff army into the Enemy camp.

The PCs are then expected to help Golatian, capture the enemy and the mirror, and save the city.

Player Intro

War means change. Nowhere is this more present than in Ravens Bluff. Once a bustling metropolis of culture, commerce, and knowledge, the city has become something completely different. The once-joyous sounds have shifted. Gone are the hawkers' cries, the children playing, and the songs of bards. Now all one can hear is a hushed, nervous whispers and the clacking of practice weapons as soldiers repeat weapon drills in the street.

Even your own lives have been turned upside down. In the months since the war broke out you have been pushed around, organized, taxed, conscripted, enlisted, and drilled. Your lives, and the lives of everyone in Ravens Bluff, have become so involved with the military that you wonder if you remember what peacetime was like. An enthusiastic military has reduced the lives of the citizens to "Yes sir!" and "No Sir!", "Get to work Soldier!" and "Did I ask you to think?!"

In fact, that's what you're doing now: following orders. You've been ordered to General Obespieri's office. The general is in charge of Ravens Bluff's external forces, and there is rumor that the army may be headed north for the largest battle to date.

Encounter One: General Obespieri

You arrive at the general's quarters as the sun reaches its apex and are quickly ushered inside. The general, an incredibly muscular man with dark hair, looks up from his papers as you enter. He flips you a quick salute and leans back in his chair. His piercing black eyes scrutinize you and you begin to feel uncomfortable under his icy stare.

Loremaster Di-Thil Sturn
6th Level Male Human
Specialty Priest of Oghma

STR:	13	Ht: 6' 0"
DEX:	11	Wt: 170 lbs
CON:	12	Age: 36
INT:	16	Hair/Eyes: Blo/Br
WIS:	17	Skin: Fair
CHR:	12	Alignment: N

AC Normal: 4 Rear: 4
THAC0: 18 Hit Points: 37

Weapon Proficiencies: Wrestling Specialization, Morning Star, Staff

Non-weapon Proficiencies: Ancient History (15), Ancient Languages of the Vast (16), Heraldry (16), Herbalism (14), Local History (12), Read/Write Common (17), Religion (17), Singing (12), Spellcraft (14)
Languages: Common

Specialty Priest Powers:
1) Turn Undead. Turn outer planes Special Undead at +4 levels
2) Cast one Identify spell per day in shrine of Oghma
3) +2 to Hit on Wrestling Attacks

Magic Items: Bag of Holding (70 cu foot capacity); Scroll–Tongues, Dispel Evil, Speak with Animals; Scroll–Speak with Dead, Slow Poison

Equipment: Ceremonial Vestment of Oghma (white shirt and trousers, black vest with gold brocade), holy symbol, scrolls in scroll cases detailing histories and legends (filling your Bag of Holding), banded armor, morning star, staff, normal clothing, boots, belt, backpack, bedroll, 3 vials holy water, magnifying glass, candle, flint and steel, quills, ink, 10 sheets parchment, 38 gp, 28 sp

Priest Spell Spheres:
Major: All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Divination, Elemental, Healing, Protection, Summoning
Minor: Guardian, Necromantic, Sun

Role-Playing Notes:
Your name is pronounced di-THEEL stern. Most people call you Dithil, which annoys you. Why your parents gave you such an odd name is a mystery. In fact, the only brilliance you credit them with is sending you to the temple when you were 8.

You spent the first years at the temple working in the kitchen and singing in the choir,

but eventually you studied the ancient mysteries of Oghma, the god of knowledge. This was when you shone, rapidly learning all the under-priests could teach. The high priest himself tutored you for the last 2 years of your stay. By the time you left, not only had you dedicated your life to Oghma, the god of knowledge, but you knew almost everything. You are a vast storehouse of history and events.

Soon after leaving the temple you met Raspathir "the General" Endoc and helped him defeat some orcs. You have stayed with him since, adventuring for 10 years. You enjoy it more than at first you thought you would. Making history is especially fun, and you write down the party's adventures and accomplishments for posterity. Oghma must look on you fondly for this.

You refer to the group as the "Warriors of Oghma" though others call it by different names or simply "the group." You have settled into the role of advisor, and offer your advice and knowledge freely. A well-informed group is a successful group.

Catherine of Agnost–a master swordswoman, obviously impressed with your knowledge. She's not very serious, often engaging in flashy displays. You like her though, faults and all. You talk religion with her, as she has siblings in the clergy.
Palithar of Erenbora–This one has a variety of skills, and great knowledge obtained throughout his long life. He often seems to have several activities going at once, but he handles it well.
Raspathir Endoc–The General has a mind for strategy, but relies on your counsel and knowledge, as he should. You've have been together for 10 years now; similar interests have forged an unlikely friendship.
T'zzarr't ("Zar")–Nothing in your training prepared you to work with a half-drow. That he's a thief doesn't help either... At first you were suspicious, but the four years you have known him have taught you tolerance.
Bormark Rothjansen–Always asking about the history of this or that, usually getting the group involved in strange adventures. In addition to being a ranger, he's probably a Harper (a secret society of nosy do-gooders).

The General will continue to study the party until he feels it time to speak. If the PCs speak first, the general will chastise them with an extremely loud and strong *"DID I ASK YOU TO SPEAK, SOLDIER?!"* The general treats most PCs as enlisted men. The only exceptions are knights, whom he will ask to do things rather than order. Eventually the General will speak again.

"I have heard good things about you people, but quite honestly I don't see it. You are lazy, self-absorbed, and poorly motivated. You're obsessed with personal gain, magic, and trivialities. These are poor motivations for anyone who would consider himself sentient."

"But, I do have need of a group for a special mission and it will have to be you. Here's the situation:

"Commander Nioga, a personal friend of mine, has recently discovered the intentions of the enemy force. It would seem that the enemy has amassed itself to the east of Mossbridges, our ally to the north. Their intention is to take Mossbridges and use that city as a launching point for a full-scale invasion of Ravens Bluff. This cannot be allowed to happen. The army will leave at first light tomorrow morning and march straight to Mossbridges in hope of arriving before the siege begins.

"Since you have somehow been recommended to me as trustworthy and faithful , you shall take this letter ahead of the army to Commander Nioga in Mossbridges and place yourselves in his service. You are to leave immediately; good mounts are waiting for you outside.

"I expect you to place this letter in Nioga's hands by dusk tonight. Don't let me down. You are dismissed."

With that the General pushes a sealed scroll tube across the desk to the party and looks back down into his paperwork. If the PCs attempt to speak with him he will simply repeat the word *"DISMISSED."*

The PCs find six riding horses awaiting them outside. Each horse is equipped with bit, bridle, blanket, oats, a sleeping blanket, and one day's rations. The horses are rested and capable of making the journey.

It is a 12-hour march for the army from Ravens Bluff to Mossbridges. The PCs can make this journey by horse in less than five hours. It is currently just past noontime. The PCs do not have any time to return home for possessions or mounts.

Encounter Two: Mossbridges

You ride through the afternoon and come within sight of Mossbridges as the sun sets. Mossbridges is feeling the effects of the siege. Many battles have been fought nearby; as a result, the town has been raided many times. Ravens Bluff has committed to the town's defense, and the banner of the Company of the Bloody Hatchets flies from the smooth stone wall that surrounds the town. This was constructed using wall of stone spells, but there is also evidence of construction of real walls. One gate, in the south part of the wall, faces Ravens Bluff.

When approaching the gate, the party will be hailed by members of the Bloody Hatchets, a cocky bunch of soldiers.

"Friend or foe?" shouts someone from behind the wall at the gate.

The party must convince the defenders that they are allies to get into town. This should not be difficult; presenting the scroll from Obspieri will do.

The guards let the party in through a small door in the wall next to the gate. It is concealed from obvious view. They direct the PCs to the Military Post next to the Blushing Gynosphynx tavern, where Nioga has set up his headqaurters.

The guards on duty are disinclined to spend time talking with the PCs. Nioga has ordered that anyone coming from Ravens Bluff be sent to him immediately, and they follow Nioga's orders completely.

The town itself has a somber demeanor; most of the people here are not used to wartime living and feel cooped up. Supplies are low, though more are expected

with the army. Passerbys ask the PCs if they are with the army, when the supples will come, and if the army will arrive before the town is destroyed.

Encounter Three: Commander Nioga

Arriving at the Military Post you are quickly ushered inside to Commander Nioga, a tall, imposing man with red hair and beard. He has a very large frame, and his strength is renowned. Nioga is well known for the fanatic loyalty that his troops show him. Many a new recruit to the Ravens Bluff military hopes to become part of Nioga's famed Company of the Bloody Hatchets.

Nioga wastes no time. He quickly reads the letter and smiles at its contents before handing it to his aide.

"You have done well despite what General Ogrebane thinks of you! And I am desperate for men and have need of you. However, I can see that you are tired. Present yourself at the Blushing Gynosphynx Inn, where they have a room waiting. Eat, sleep, and allow yourselves to refresh. Tomorrow morning I will have great need of your services. Dismissed."

Nioga wears both a ring of resistance to divination spells, and a ring of mind shielding. Any attempt to fathom his alignment, mood, or intentions will have no result.

Nioga's statistics are included at the end of this adventure in the section "A Mighty Ally".

Encounter Four: Golatian the Bard

When the PCs enter the Blushing Gynosphynx, the innkeeper will greet them.

The inn looks more like a barracks than a place for making merry; tired townspeople sit on trestle benches at tables along the walls, and tables of supplies face the kitchens. Straw mats stacked in a corner attest to the fact that the injured are brought here during attacks. The innkeeper, now the village quartermaster, a ruddy-cheeked man, eyes you warily. You can see that a couple of people are doing just that in a corner, but they bear the look of Ravens Bluff soldiery. A bard plays quietly by the bar.

There are nine villagers at the tables eating. They are part of the wall defense force, and with the recent arrival of the Bloody Hatchets they have a chance to work reguar shifts and even eat. They think the Hatchets are wonderful, though a arrogant and bossy. The innkeeper, Ferred Ganross, is serving these people.

The two soldiers are Bloody Hatchet members, sent by Nioga to keep watch on the party. They will exchange small talk with the PCs for a short period, but do not spend a lot of time talking to them. Nioga has told them that he suspects there are spies among the army, and the PCs look like spies to these two.

If asked about the imminent attack, just about anyone can tell the PCs that a large enemy army is camped to the west. The Bloody Hatchets think that the attack will come in a couple of days; they refer to recent scout reports of supplies arriving at the enemy camp as the reason for postponement.

The bard is Golatian, a traveler taking refuge here for the night. He was on his way to Ravens Bluff, or so he says, and will probably turn back for Tantras in the morning. He had no idea the fighting was this bad. In actuality, Golatian is a ranking member of the Ravens Bluff army who has come to keep an eye on things in Mossbridges. He never admits this. His disguise is the work of mundane means and *alter self* spells.

A Message

During the night, a mysterious person will slip something under one of the PCs' doors and then vanish. If a PC is on watch in the hallway, then the person (Golatian) will

Catherine of Agnost
6th Level Human Female Swashbuckler (Fighter)

STR:	16	Ht: 5' 4"
DEX:	16	Wt: 120 lbs
CON:	15	Age: 26
INT:	13	Hair/Eyes: Aub/Gr
WIS:	12	Skin: Fair
CHR:	13	Alignment: NG

AC Normal: 2 AC Rear: 6
THAC0: 15 Hit Points: 53

Weapon Proficiencies: Fencing Blades Group (rapier, sabre, stiletto, dagger, main gauche), Sabre Specialization, Stiletto Specialization, Rapier Specialization, Punching Specialization, Two-Weapon Style Specialization, Short Bow

Non-weapon Proficiencies: Blind-Fighting, Dancing (16), Endurance (15), Etiquette (13), Gaming (13), Juggling (15), Riding–Horse (15), Tumbling (16)
Languages: Common

Tricks:	to hit Penalty
1) Cutting Off Buttons	-3
2) Disarm Opponent	-3
3) Stapling Clothes to Wall (thrown stiletto called shot)	-2

Magic Items: Cloak of Protection +2; Sabre +2; Stiletto +1

Possessions: leather armor, short bow, quiver with 20 arrows, 6 stilettos in belt sheaths, non-magical sabre, practice rapier (not usable in combat), several colorful and well-coordinated suits of clothing with matching belts and gloves and hats, some simple jewelry (10 gp total value) to wear, fashionable warm cloak, backpack, bedroll, whetstone, hooded lantern, 3 flasks lamp oil, 1 flask greek fire, 92 gp

Role-Playing Notes:
You wanted to be noticed and admired since you were a baby. Maybe it came from having an older sister in the priesthood of Tymora and a younger brother in the priesthood of Llira. Your ambition during childhood was to become a bard, but you soon discovered that you couldn't sing. Your memory isn't that great either. However, you always had a natural talent with swords. When you were 16, you ran away with a carnival to become a sword performer.

Blessed with superior skill with light weapons, above average looks, and a keen fashion sense, you soon were a star.

You enjoyed the life, but left it when you received a summons for help from your brother, Tom. While helping him, you met and joined this group. In the three years you have adventured with these people you have come to see that being admired for doing worthwhile things is much more satisfying than simply being admired as a performer.

You usually dress in the flashiest, most stylish clothes, always in the forefront of fashion. Your favorite weapon, your sabre, always rests at your side. You are fond of gaming, but would rather engage in bouts of skill than in games of chance. You do not believe in disguise, and although you see the merit of sneaking in to the villains' lair, you are sure to claim the credit (for the group) afterward for defeating them. You enjoy single combat with worthy foes.

Loremaster Di-Thil Sturn–Priests of Oghma must be an arrogant lot. Despite his superior attitude, you are still impressed with how much information he knows.

Palithar of Erenbora–His multitude of talents fit in well, and he is your closest friend in the group. His songbird exemplifies his elven light touch. He sometimes trains with you.

Raspathir Endoc–The General. He sure is interested in fighting, though he leaves it all to you. You've filled in holes in his plans occasionally. He doesn't seem to have strong feelings for people. You respect him as a leader.

T'zzarr't ("Zar")–This half-drow thief is too mercenary. He comes on to you infrequently, and you have no interest of that kind in him. You try not to offend him, and let him practice fighting drills with you.

Bormark Rothjansen–You had a brief but passionate love for this ranger when you joined, but it passed before you told him about it. You still cherish fond feelings for him. He is the group's second-in-command, and a good leader.

bring the packet and claim that he saw one of the PCs drop it, or maybe it was one of the suspicious-looking soldiers downstairs. In any case, he arranges to leave it and then quietly disappears.

The packet consists of a note folded around a silver coin. Closer examination of the coin reveals the stamp of Ravens Bluff on one side, and the sigil of a Hawk on the other.

The note itself reads:

My fellow brothers,

You must proceed with much caution. There is something in Mossbridges that is not right. Do what Commander Nioga asks of you, but be prepared for treachery around every corner. Nothing is safe. Every single thing you do in the next two days will influence the rest of your lives. You must trust me as the hawk trusts the air.

Once read, the note and coin suddenly burst into flame, and are quickly consumed.

Encounter Five: A Mission

The PCs will be woken in the morning by a knock on the door. A soldier will "request" that the PCs report to Nioga immediately.

You spot Nioga almost as soon as you arrive at the field command center. He speaks quietly with one of his lieutenants. They continue for several minutes more before Nioga turns to you.

"Ahhh! Good morrow to you all. I hope you rested well.

"The enemy commander has demanded our surrender. I have chosen you to convey my reply to the enemy host approximately six hours east of Mossbridges. Here is the message and a map. I am also sending some of my best men to act as your escort. You are simply to take the message, deliver it, and return. Do not wait for an answer; do not cause trouble. You are acting diplomats for Ravens Bluff and Mossbridges. Good luck my friends."

Handing you the message and the map, Nioga exits the tent. An aide, the lieutenant with whom Nioga spoke, motions you after him. Following, you find your mounts amidst a company of twelve men. There are ten enlisted men, two sergeants, and, of course, the lieutenant.

The message simply says *"Go to the Abyss!,"* but the PCs should receive it sealed and not read it. If they do choose to open and read it, tell them what it says and then have the lieutenant berate them for being treasonous and impudent.

The Lieutenant will wait for the party to mount before signalling the advance. Quiet, confident, veteran enlisted men will form up around the party. All of the men wear the emblem of the Company of the Bloodied Hatchets.

Of all the men, only the lieutenant will speak with the PCs. His name is Lieutenant Sorackie. His men will not speak with the PCs as they consider this escort beneath their abilities, and have been ordered not to by Nioga.

The Lieutenant knows a bit about the military situation of Mossbridges and appears to know exactly where he is going. The enemy force is located just south of the Chemaline forest, which lies six hours ride outside of Mossbridges. The enemy is expected to begin moving at dusk tonight towards the west and will arrive tomorrow morning. This will give them several hours of rest before they can begin their attack.

A *detect evil intent* or other such spell will reveal that the Lieutenant feels animosity towards the PCs.

Unexpected Emptiness

After several hours' hard ride you arrive on the hillside which overlooks the Chemaline forest and its neighboring plain. As you take in the surrounding countryside, your confusion grows. Before you is the plain, looking like any other completely deserted plain you would expect to see. Both the plain and the forest look uninhabited.

The party may look about for clues. There is no trace of any army anywhere, nor has there been one here for at least a tenday. Lieutenant Sorackie appears just as bewildered as the PCs. A detect lie or such will reveal that Sorackie is not bewildered as much as he appears to be.

Unexpected Enemies

When the PCs turn to head back to Mossbridges, or turn on Sorackie, Sorackie will signal the platoon and the entire unit will attack the PCs (as Nioga so ordered).

Enlisted Men (9), human F3: Int Average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; hp 26; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (Short Sword); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 17.

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, 10 gold each

Sergeant #1, hm F5: Int Average; AL LE; AC 3; MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (Long Sword); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 17.

chain mail, long sword, 25 gold

Sergeant #2, hem F5/W6: Int Average; AL LE; AC 3 (armor spell, Dex); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (Long Sword); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SDex 17; Z M (6'); ML 17.

Possessions: long sword, 25 gold

Spells: 1st level– burning hands, color spray, armor (precast), sleep; 2nd level– invisibility, mirror image; 3rd level– haste (on self and comrades as battle starts), hold person.

Magical item: wand of magic missiles with 10 charges.

He uses his wand to disrupt spellcasting by holding his action until a spell is started, then firing. He can fire two missiles per round, both must go at once (though they could be at different targets).

Lieutenant, hm F8: Int High; AL LE; AC 2; MV 12; hp 62; THAC0 10; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4+5 (Bastard Sword + Strength); SA specialized in bastard sword; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 17.

Possessions: bastard sword +1, 50 gold

Unexpected Information

The men know the following pieces of information. However, getting it is the problem. They won't talk unless they are dead (treat them as hostile for purposes of speak with dead spells), charmed, or tortured. If the PCs need to get access to a speak with dead spell, they can haul a body back to Mossbridges; there is a priest there (5th level) who can cast the spell for them.

If the PCs have to resort to torture, well,... it should be an interesting moral dilemma for them.

They have no papers of any kind; Nioga's orders to kill the PCs were verbal.

If the PCs successfully interrogate the soldiers they can learn:

- Nioga has gone over to the enemy and is working with them. His troops, being fanatical followers, have done so as well. Nioga has promised them great rewards.
- There never was an enemy force outside of Mossbridges. The story was a ruse to trick the army out of Ravens Bluff so that the enemy force could invade without hindrance.
- Nioga has been given the position of General in the enemy force in exchange for his help.
- The enemy intends to attack Ravens Bluff at sunrise the next morning.
- It is rumored that Nioga has a Noble Genie who will give a wish to any man who helps Nioga. None of these guys have gotten wishes.

If the party goes back to Mossbridges, go to Encounter Six. If they decide instead to go straight back to Ravens Bluff, go to Encounter Seven.

Encounter Six: Return to Mossbridges

You've ridden back as quickly as possible to Mossbridges, but still the light has started to fade as you reach the outskirts of the town. As you crest a small hill outside the town you notice the army of Ravens Bluff has just arrived and begun to settle into position. Riding into town you are met by General Obespieri, who is frantically arguing with the City Elders.

"...mean Nioga is gone?"

"He had orders from you to..."

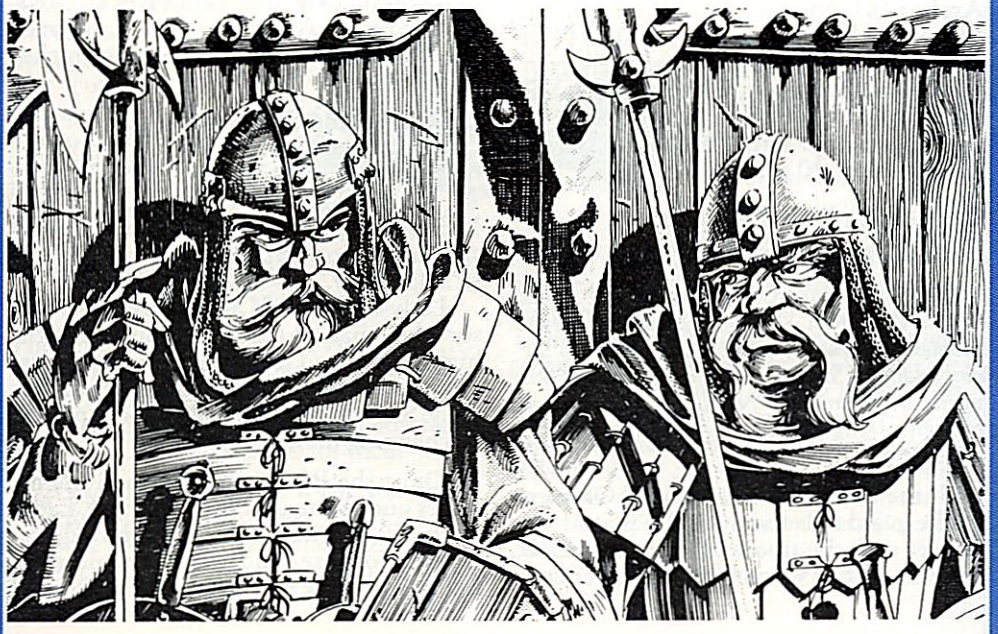
"What orders? I never sent any orders? Someone find Nioga!"

The party should approach and reveal all to the general. At first the general will be upset at the PCs for speaking out of turn, but as more information comes out he will quickly see that they have done him a great service. As Nioga's betrayal is revealed, Obespieri will become furious. He screams:

"That good for nothing, impudent boy! That's what comes from hiring your in-laws! I will personally reward the man or woman responsible for Nioga's capture!"

After fuming General Obespieri will calm down enough to lay out a plan.

"Ravens Bluff is due to be attacked tomor-



Palithar of Erenbora
Elven Male 4th Fighter/4th Mage/5th Thief

STR:	14	Ht: 4' 6"
DEX:	17	Wt: 81 lbs
CON:	10	Age: 247
INT:	15	Hair/Eyes: Bro/Gr
WIS:	10	Skin: Pale Fair
CHR:	15	Alignment: CG

AC Normal: 1 Rear: 4
THAC0: 17 Hit Points: 22

Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Composite Short Bow, Single Weapon Style Spec., Dagger

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Animal Lore (15), Appraising (15), Direction Sense (11), Hunting (9), Pottery (15), Read/Write Elven (16), Read/Write Common (16)

Languages: Common, Elvish

Thief Skills

PP 40% (-20)	HS 45% (-10)
OL 37% (-5)	HN 40% (-5)
FT 33% (-5)	CW 85% (-20)
MS 45% (-10)	RL 20%

Backstab (+4 to Hit, x3 Damage)
Note: Penalties in parentheses should be applied when wearing elven chain mail

Magic Items: Longsword +1; Elven Chain Mail +1; Potion of Stone Giant Strength

Possessions: composite short bow, 8 daggers in bandolier sheath, quiver with 17 arrows, bedroll, 30 feet of rope, 3 climbing spikes, small hammer, hat, silver symbol of Erevan Ilesere, wineskin, warm cloak, boots, leather gloves, thieves tools, a white songbird, a cage, spell components, 53 gp, 2 gems worth 100 gp each

Role-Playing Notes:

You've always been interested in doing several things at once. Sometimes you don't finish projects, but those were usually the uninteresting ones. When something really grabs your interest you stay until the end. You became triple-classed this way, exploring fighting, magic, and thieving at one time.

Six years ago you were sent to assist adventurers in defeating some trolls that threatened your woods. Afterwards, you decided to stay with the group.

You've found the human world to be even more specialized and disciplined than your own elven home. The people are very good at what they do, but

they are too focused and seem to miss a lot of life's pleasures by not being open to possibilities. You try and show them the variety and experience they're missing when you can. For example when the group is investigating, you find details that show other sides of the situation or persons involved.

You still dress in the elven colors of your homeland, browns, greens, and grays. Another reminder of your home that you carry is your songbird Lily. She is very precious to you and goes on all your adventures (in a cage), though she stays in camp during dangerous parts. You can get her to stop singing by covering her cage with a dark cloth, but you rarely do this.

You have noticed that humans and other non-human races expect elves to act happy and carefree. You try and live up to this. You don't usually let strangers see sadness or troubles. You work hard at understanding humans, especially the people you work with.

Loremaster Di-Thil Sturn–This priest of Oghma knows a lot of stuff, but he's boring. You ask questions and add details to liven it up. He doesn't seem to understand that history is living, not a dry account. He acts better than everyone in the group.

Catherine of Agnost–One of your best human friends. Her skills seem more talent than discipline, though she does practice. Sometimes you join her. She's saved you a few times.

Raspathir Endoc–The General is a bit intimidating. He's unlike other mages you've met. He can be both imperative and friendly. He allows discussion, but once he decides, he expects to be obeyed. His plans work, though.

T'zzarr't ("Zar")–After years of adventuring you are still suspicious of Zar. He seems callous sometimes, and hatred for drow is hard to bypass. He is a good thief with unusual perceptions, including superior infravision and the ability to sense underground like a dwarf.

Bormark Rothjansen–There was a time when you had to supply woodland skills and knowledge for the group, but you're glad Bormark does it now. You've never been interested in tracking. You like his gung-ho attitude and curiosity.

row morning. First, we must warn Therogeon of this impending strike. You six, who have served me well, you are to ride immediately to Ravens Bluff, find General Therogeon, and tell him all I tell you, plus all you have told me. Tell him that I cannot march the troops back without first resting them. At the earliest we can get the troops back by tomorrow afternoon. I shall endeavor to do my best. What are you waiting for? GO!!"

As the PCs ride for Ravens Bluff they encounter a dozen enemy scouts who are watching for the Ravens Bluff Army. The PCs notice the scouts first and may attempt to go around them (see below: "The Way Around"), or they may drive through them risking attack and injury (see below: "Into the Wind").

The Way Around

The PCs avoid the scouts, but make them describe how, the precautions they take, and ask them each to roll d20. If anyone rolls 20, then they are spotted and the enemy gets a couple shots with arrows.

Use the appropriate archer stats from below, with a -5 to hit because they are firing at long range. Keep firing a shot or two until the PCs flee. The scouts do not pursue.

If the PCs turn back to attack, use the next section.

Into the Wind

If the PCs choose to attack, they run into the following enemy troops, who will take the party for an Ravens Bluff patrol.

Scout (6), human F3: Int Average; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 17; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6+2 (Short Sword); SA specialization in short sword; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 13.

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, 10 gold each

Archer (6), human F5: Int Average; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; hp 40; THAC0 14 or 16; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1d6 (flight arrows or short swords); SA nil; SD nil; Dex 17; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 13.

Possessions: long bow, short sword, leather armor, 10 gold each

Encounter Seven: The Loss of a Hero

You arrive in Ravens Bluff in the wee hours before the dawn. The guard, after several moments of questioning, allows you into the city adding, "Strange tiding must abound this night for Commander Nioga just rode through himself asking where he could find General Therogeon."

If the PCs ask where General Obspieri is, the guard tells them that he is at Mossbridges with the troops (*"Where else should he be?"*). If the PCs go back to Mossbridges instead of pursuing Nioga, go back to Encounter Six, which will send them back here.

The gate guard can direct the PCs to Therogeon's location inside the city at Castle Ironguard, the City Defense Headquarters.

If the PCs delayed by making an extra trip to Mossbridges (coming directly from the section titled "Unexpected Enemies" to Ravens Bluff, then back to Mossbridges, then back to Ravens Bluff), Nioga is no longer here. General Therogeon is still dead, however. Adjust the following description accordingly.

Bursting into the General's quarters you see Nioga standing over General Therogeon, who is slumped forward across his desk. The desk is covered in a rapidly expanding pool of blood and Nioga holds a curved dagger in his hands.

The PCs may attempt to halt Nioga with spells or attacks. He will take damage, but will make all of his saving throws and (for the first round) will not be affected by any charm or hold spells that the PCs use. Nioga's first action will be to reach out and touch an imperceptible spot in space. This is the scrying spot from a mirror of mental prowess, and by Nioga's action, he travels back to the mirror's point of origin. He escapes at the end of the first round.

A Lady Knight

As you stare at the vapor left by Nioga and the lifeless form of General Therogeon, a woman dressed in finely wrought chainmail enters the room. You immediately recognize her as the famous Lady Caroline Skyhawk, Commander of the Griffon Ride.

"By all that is holy," she shouts rushing to the dead man, "What have you done to him?"

The party better do some quick explaining and deliver their message to Skyhawk or they will quickly find themselves arrested for murder. However, she is intelligent and perceptive; she will soon ascertain the truth.

Lady Caroline Skyhawk, Knight of the Griffon, Commander of the Griffon Ride, hf F8: AL NG; AC 2 (chain mail +3); MV 12; hp 75; THAC0 13; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d8+5 (long sword +3); SA long sword specialization; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M (5'2"); ML 19.

Lady Caroline is a wealthy and very social woman, a true lady, imbued with high morals and dedication to her duties that make her a valued commander in the army. She can make snap decisions and yet be charming in their execution.

Once the PCs have explained themselves and the reason they are here, Lady Skyhawk will take charge. Skyhawk was Therogeon's second-in-command and assumes her new role with quick authority.

Although she does not desire the General's position, it is painfully aware to her that she must forget her own personal feelings for the good of the city.

Upon hearing your news Skyhawk wastes no time. She immediately yells towards the door where a tenuous office lad stands nervously. "Tremai! Quickly, rouse the commanders, the runners and the entire staff! We are under attack! Sound the warning bells, prepare the gates! And Tremai, get the High Sorcerer in here, in his small clothes if necessary!"

The boy turns from the door and begins screaming. Throughout the complex the cries of "Attack!" and "Awaken!" can be heard in seconds. After a moment of thought Lady Skyhawk turns to you.

"I know you have ridden hard, and the night has no doubt sorely pressed you, but if what you tell me is true, the enemy will be hard upon us by dawn. However, there is still the problem of Nioga and his men, and for that you may be useful. Please get some rest and report here tomorrow at dawn. Dismissed."

As Lady Skyhawk's orders sink in, she turns her back on you and begins to study a map of the city spread across Therogeon's desk. Turning to leave the office, you cannot help but notice the large blood stain, Therogeon's blood, which is smeared across the center of Ravens Bluff.

If the PCs bring up the concept of raising Therogeon from the dead, Lady Caroline states that there will be time for that after the current crisis, though she thanks the PCs for their consideration (and any offers they make towards having this done).

Encounter Eight: A Secret Entrance

The following morning, the PCs report to Castle Ironguard as ordered, as they are still in the army.

If they do report, they find Lady Skyhawk and Golatian waiting for them.

As you enter the offices where you found General Therogeon yesterday, you find Lady Caroline Skyhawk and another man whom you recognize as Golatian, the bard from Mossbridges. Commader Skyhawk speaks: "It seems that your band has attracted quite some notice. Might I present to you Commander Jathan, Knight of the Hawk, chief of the Brotherhood, and fourth—make that third—in command of the Army."

The PCs may react to this news anyway they wish. Any speech however, will be cut off as the bard Golatian (actually Jathan) speaks:

"I do not have time to waste with trivialites or explanations. I have need of your services, as I aided you not long ago. Come with me," he says, walking past you and out the door.

You follow Commander Jathan through the city to a small private home, then around the corner of a building and into another small private home. From the outside the house looks almost abandoned. Inside, the building is bustling with activity as a large company of Knights of the Hawk move about. Jathan leads you up a set of stairs to an observation room. For a moment he speaks with an aide before moving to a small covered window and peering through a spy hole. He indicates for each of you to do likewise.

The spy hole looks out onto the street and directly at another private home. This one, unlike the one you are in now, appears to be much more lavish. It is a two story structure with white and red trimming. The entire property is fenced by an eight foot high stone wall. Two finely wrought steel gates are closed.

"The house you are looking at is where the attack will come from. It is also the hideout of the former Commander Nioga. Nioga's plan was simple: distract the army, magically convey the enemy force inside the city, and overrun it from the inside. Thanks to your actions though, things have gotten harder for him.

"However, Nioga still can pull this off. The army is still too far away, and Nioga still has his magical mirror. You see, with this magical mirror one can scrye any location. Furthermore, if one knows how, one can use the mirror to travel. With his mirror Nioga can transport troops inside the city.

"We know that the mirror is inside the

Raspathir "the General" Endoc
6th Level Half-Elf Male
Conjuror (Wizard Specialist)

STR:	10	Ht: 6' 2"
DEX:	12	Wt: 184 lbs
CON:	15	Age: 32
INT:	17	Hair/Eyes: Bla/Br
WIS:	13	Skin: Fair
CHR:	16	Alignment: LG

AC Normal: 5 Rear: 5
THAC0: 19 Hit Points: 27

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Staff

Non-Weapon Proficiencies: Engineering (14), Etiquette (16), Gaming (13–Chess Specialization 16), Military History (16), Read/Write Common (18), Spellcraft (15), Weather Sense (12)

Languages: Common, Elvish

Magic Items: Bracers of Defense AC 5; Ring of Spell Storing–*summon swarm, illusionary wall, summon shadow, ventriloquism*

Possessions: Spell Books, Staff, 2 daggers, backpack, bedroll, pillow, 5 sheets parchment, writing ink and 2 quills, 2 scrolls showing tactical diagrams of famous battles, spell components, spyglass, magnifying glass, soap, clothes, boots, belt, sash, silk jacket, cloak, 70 gp, 36 sp, 30 gp necklace

Role-Playing Notes:

You love the concept of war, pitting your army and strategy against a foe's. You grew up on the stories of your father, a veteran soldier in the Cormyr army. However, you have no taste for actual fighting. You don't even like training with weapons. Needless to say, your parents despaired of you.

Instead you became a conjuror. You took to magic, and now command respect as one who can summon untold allies to serve you. While training you continued to study military history and tactical analysis, and played a lot of chess.

After your training, you heard of some orcs that needed defeating, and set about finding some troops to lead against them. In this way you formed the adventuring company you've led ever since. There has been a turnover of members in the 10 years that the group has adventured together, but Loremaster Di-Thil has stayed with you from the start. Palithar joined the

group 6 years ago, Zar joined 4 years ago, and both Bormark and Catherine joined 3 years ago. The group does not have an official name, but you tend to call them "the troops." This is subconscious on your part, and if asked not to you will do so again in a couple of hours.

You are a good tactician and have a strong personality. You naturally feel that conjuration magic is the best, and you tend to rely on your magic a great deal. For example, you do not own a horse. You rely on *phantom steed* or in emergencies *mount* to provide your transport. You still hate fighting, and will always find others to do the actual combat for you. However you honestly care for your fellow adventurers, and will not engage in risky strategies without their total support.

Loremaster Di-Thil Sturn–He knows many useful things about places and people, and you're used to his interrupting you with advice. He seems to believe that his knowledge is the essential element of the group's success. You know that strategy wins battles. There's a warm feeling of camaraderie between the two of you, having known each other for 10 years.

Catherine of Agnost–An excellent fighter and the mainstay of your battle plans. The only thing you worry about is her tendency to engage in single combat with enemies instead of following the plan. You work around this.

Palithar of Erenbora–Palithar's wide base of skills make him useful in seconding others or in allowing for flexibility. He adds depth to investigations by unearthing interesting details. He usually has a good opinions.

T'zzarr't ("Zar")–The half-drow turned out to be a good addition to your army. His skills at getting into places and superior infravision have been the success of several operations. He questions your orders, but you hear him out and then explain the reasons why your plan is best.

Bormark Rothjansen–Also a good fighter, his tracking and woodland skills are invaluable. He is forever trying to interfere in other peoples' business. He shows promise of good leadership abilities and as your second-in-command, you train him to lead the group in the future.

house. But, if we simply overran the house, Nioga would flee with the Mirror and attack from a different position. So unless we can destroy, or better yet, capture the mirror, Nioga will win.

"That's where you come in. General Obespiere, Lady Skyhawk, and I have been very impressed with your skills. If you sneak into the house and steal the mirror, we could use it to send the Ravens Bluff forces directly into the heart of the enemy camp.

"That's what I need you for. Quite frankly, Nioga and his men know most of my men, while you are relatively unknown and have already proven your ability to thwart his plans. Yet don't let your pride get the better of you; this is the most critical mission you've ever been on. One in which you risk life and limb. I can't make you do it, I only ask for volunteers."

The PCs are expected (but not required) to volunteer.

Encounter Nine: The Manse of Nioga

Show the PCs the map of Nioga's house. This map details the grounds and what the Brotherhood has been able to ascertain regarding the guards. The PCs are left to plan how to get into the house and capture the mirror.

Jathan will give the PCs one potion of teleportation. The person who imbibes this potion may proceed to envision the room the PCs are planning from and they will be teleported there. It is Jathan's hope that the potion can be used to get the mirror (and one PC) out of enemy hands. He will want it back if it is not used.

Jathan does not know the command word for the Mirror. He does not have any further recommendation on getting into the house. The PCs are required to determine this on their own. If the PCs spend more than 10 minutes (real time) attempting to plan, Jathan will remind them that time is short. After 15 minutes (real time) he tells them they must leave IMMEDIATELY.

The party may invade the house any way they wish. Whatever plan the PCs come up with should be relatively successful, unless they act foolishly. However, keep the PCs on their toes while they search the house. Make up other necessary details common to any house.

Where there are guards positioned in the house, the PCs need to act fast to prevent them from sounding the alarm. The PCs always have surprise and always win initiative over these guards. The guards are all 0-level humans and are described below.

Guards: Int Average; AL LE; AC 8 (leather) or 5 (chain); MV 12; HD 1; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); SA nil; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 12.

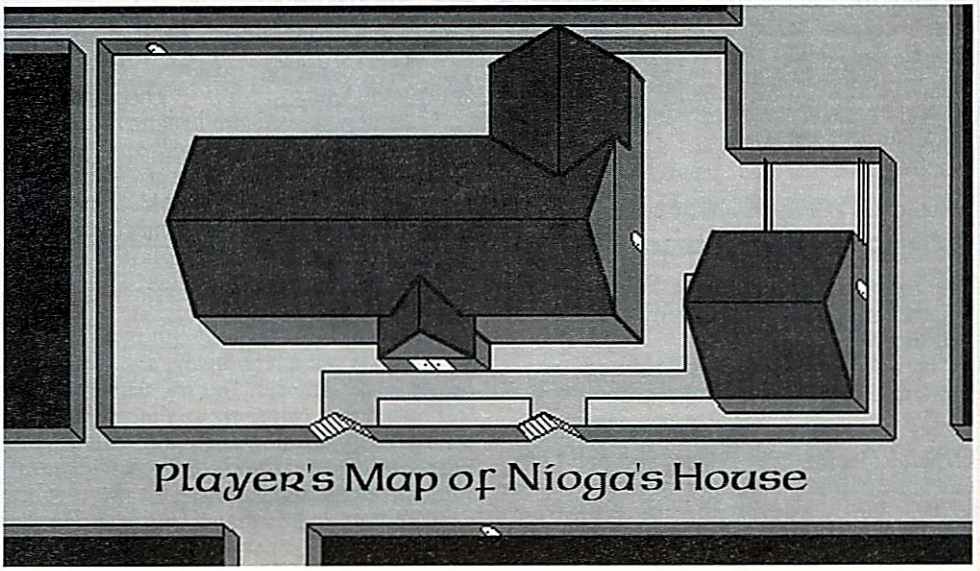
Remember, the invasion of the house is dramatic. Play upon the party's fear by having a guard see them and getting off a half shout (as he dies), or by having the PC step on a creaky board (making a loud creak and possibly alerting the enemy of their presence). Stealth and speed are the friends of the enemy; play upon these without unduly hampering the party.

Use the maps to follow the PCs through the house. If the PCs for some reason get through the house without a single encounter, this is fine. In fact, it is best for them.

When the PCs come upon the mirror room, proceed to Encounter Ten.

Nioga's House

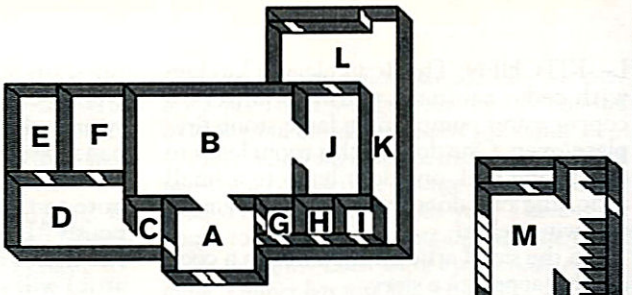
This grand building, known as Amethyst Estate, is the home of Commander Nioga. Formerly, it was considered one of the most lovely of homes in all of the Vast. Recently, however, Nioga has turned the beautiful house into a military complex and allowed the building to become slightly run down.



Player's Map of Nioga's House

OUTSIDE

All windows have been boarded up and will not allow any exit or entrance. There are two entrances to the house: the front doors (double doors made of carved oak and adamantine bands, decorated with a platinum and amethyst handles, hinges and knockers), and a smaller side door near the carriage house.



Ground Floor

CARRIAGE HOUSE (M)

The carriage house is a smaller, but no less beautiful building to the right of the main house. It contains a series of sliding doors upon its front, a large carriage staging area, several horse stalls, a tack and harness room, and a small outside horse pen. An additional door gives access to the back of the building where miscellaneous landscaping equipment can be found.

Outside of the carriage house, four horses are in the horse pen. Inside the carriage house, all of the horse stalls are filled. There are two carriages at ready. Inside the tack room are a number of sets of tack, most of it virtually worthless.

Two stable boys are here, sleeping in the tack room. A guard is also sleeping inside one of the carriages.

ENTRY/GROUND FLOOR

A—FOYER: The foyer is a large room which opens up into a magnificent ballroom (B). The floor is tiled with marble with polished gold borders. There is a single door to the left, two doors on the right. Two guards stand at attention in this room.

B—BALLROOM: The foyer opens directly into this ballroom,considered one of the most beautiful sights in Ravens Bluff. The marble floor continues from the foyer, through this room and into the adjoining dining hall. However unlike the rest of the house, the ballroom ceiling extends beyond the second floor and is covered in gold leaf. Hanging from the ceiling is a stunning, enchanted chandelier which is made of silver and amethyst, and is rumored to be more valuable than the entire house. Whenever anyone enters the room, or is in the room, the chandelier springs to life and fills the entire ballroom with bright light.

Also spaced about the walls are silver and amethyst sconces which emulate the chandelier when anyone enters. Removing the sconces will negate their magic.

The sconces are separated by a series of plush reddish curtains which hang over the walls for decoration.

C—STAIRS: The circular stairwell, a wide, polished adamantine affair, twists from the first floor up to the attic. The first floor portion of the stairwell overlooks (and is visible from) the sitting room (D).

D—SITTING ROOM: This room is decorated with a large soft rug, a number of comfortable sofas, chairs, and tables. One wall contains a tapestry which depicts the legendary undersea city of the Sea Elves. Another wall contains a fully stocked bar (with crystal decanters), a suit of armor (non-magical), a large fireplace (unlit), and Commander Nioga's family crest. Over the fireplace, a set of (magical) rapiers are crossed over a portrait of Commander Nioga.

Four guards sit chatting idly in this room. They are on call should they be needed. These are the guards who would be sent to investigate any noise the PCs might make.

E—LIBRARY: This room is a large dusty library. Since Nioga is not a man of books there are only about 20 books in this entire room. The shelves and four chairs in this room have been covered with sheets to prevent dust from settling.

F—STUDY: This is a large oaken room with a sturdy carpet. In the middle of the room, a large desk sits covered by a giant map of Ravens Bluff and its surrounding countryside. There are no markings on the map, and nothing in this room contains anything of relevance. There is one guard in this room who is asleep.

G—CLOAKROOM: This is a large, empty room. A number of unused cloak hooks line the walls.

H—PRIVY: This is quite obviously a privy, despite the plush sofa in the middle, the large marble water basin, and the gold trimmed mirror hanging on one wall.

I—PRIVY: This room is identical (though smaller) to the privy detailed above.

J—DINING HALL: This room opens off of the Ballroom (B) and is decorated in a similar manner, with similar wall sconces. The center of the room is taken up with an immense 40 foot long, 10 foot wide cedar dining table. Comfortable cedar and velvet chairs circle the table, and a number of smaller tables line the walls. Along the walls a series of portraits hang, each with placard identifying the former lords and ladies of Amethyst Estate.

K—PANTRY HALL: This is a long, wide hall lined with shelves. The shelves are stocked with a number of rations, and foodstuffs.

T'zzarr't ("ZAR")
7th Level Half-Drow Male Thief

STR:	11	Ht: 4' 5"
DEX:	18	Wt: 86 lbs
CON:	16	Age: 187
INT:	11	Hair/Eyes: Wht/Bl
WIS:	9	Skin: Gray-Brown
CHR:	14	Alignment: CG

AC Normal: 3 Rear: 7
THAC0: 17 Hit Points: 48

Weapon Proficiencies: Short Sword, Dagger, Dart

Non-weapon Proficiencies: Alertness (10), Animal Handling– Giant Lizard (8), Appraising (11), Gaming (14), Tumbling (18)

Languages: Common, Drow

Thief Skills

PP 42%	HS 60%
OL 58%	HN 57%
FT 52%	CW 91%
MS 65%	RL 0%

Backstab (+4 to Hit, x3 Damage)

Magic Items: Short Sword +1; Ring of Fire Resistance; Potion of Growth; Ring of Protection +1

Special Item: 2 vials thick greenish contact poison in opaque sealed vials (type O paralytic poison)

Possessions: Leather Armor, 8 daggers in sheaths all over your body, 20 darts, bedroll, dark colored silk clothing, 50 feet silk rope, padded grapple hook, small hourglass, cloak, leather gloves, boots, large sack, flint and steel, flask of lubricating oil for locks, thieves' tools, wineskin, pouch trail mix, chalk, 32 gp, 12 sp, gem worth 50 gp

Role-Playing Notes:

You were born in the drow city of Menzobarranzan. For years you were a slave, working with the giant pack lizards. Your life changed when your caravan was attacked by adventurers. They slew all the drow masters and set you free on the surface.

You knew you were different from other drow in the way you looked and the abilities which you lacked. This was readily apparent when you emerged on the surface. You heard legends for many years of how awful the surface world was, how the burning sun was deadly. When you first came into the sunlight it was indeed painful. The pain soon passed, though. With time you found that the surface world wasn't that bad. There were

even some good things, like the variety of food, and the wines.

Unfortunately, these things cost money, and you didn't have any. In fact, the only things you were able to bring out of the Drow homeland were 2 vials of a very rare contact poison, which you save for emergencies. You resorted to skills learned while a slave and began stealing. Eventually you joined a thieves' guild and received training in these skills. You stayed with the guild for a while, but eventually you decided to move on.

You joined this adventuring group four years ago. It took you some time, but you came to like and trust these people.

From your life among the drow you have acquired a callousness about life, and a lack of sympathy that some of your friends don't understand. The group has on occasion taken on missions for which no pay was offered, and while you join in on such missions, you would rather be paid. No one ever did anything out of goodwill in the drow homeland. It is hard getting used to the concept of charity and "helping out."

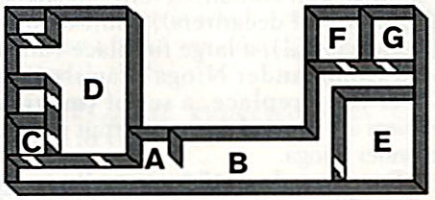
Loremaster Di-Thil Sturn–Different than other priests you've known. He doesn't lord it over you, but instead constantly shows off. You respect him, but cannot feel close. The concept of male priests is difficult, too.
Catherine of Agnost–Definitely a pretty lady, and an amazing fighter. You respect her skills and train with her on occasion. You would also like to get to know her more intimately, but she becomes frosty when you make such suggestions.
Palithar of Erenbora–After initial suspicions on both sides (you had heard how corrupt surface elves were), you finally warmed up to this one. He is humorous and easy to like.
Raspathir Endoc–This half-elf wizard reminds you of priestesses of Lolth, always snapping out orders. But at least he listens if you disagree, and modifies his plans if you have good ideas. You call him General.
Bormark Rothjansen–His skills and interests are opposite yours; he personifies the surface wilderness. This interests you; you observe him and try to imitate a little. Each of you respects the other's expertise.

L—KITCHEN: This is an elegant kitchen with cedar cabinets, marble counters, a copper water pump, and a large stone fireplace/oven. One door in this room leads to the dining hall, one door leads to a small attic, and one door leads to the basement and wine cellar.

In the small attic off the kitchen a cook and his apprentice sleep.

SECOND FLOOR:

A—STAIRS: The circular stairwell, a wide, polished adamantine affair, twists from the first floor up to the attic. There is a landing upon the second floor which opens out to a small sitting area (B).



Second Floor

B—SITTING AREA: A small sitting area is here with two guards asleep on sofas. On the external wall of this room (one wall borders the ballroom, while the other is the side of the house) is a secret door. This door leads to a small crawl space, which is empty.

C—SITTING ROOM: This is a small sitting room off of the master bedroom. It contains several chairs, a porcelain tea set (which has been used but not removed), and a small desk. The desk contains writing implements, paper, and the personal seal of Commander Nioga, and his family.

D—MASTER BEDROOM: This is a large master bedroom with a immense cedar bed set. The room is sparsely decorated. A Small privy and slightly large closet are off of this room, as well as the private sitting room.

E—BEDROOM: This is a smaller bedroom. There are ten soldiers sleeping on the floor of this room.

F—BEDROOM: Another bedroom. There are four soldiers sleeping in this room.

G—BEDROOM: Yet another bedroom. There are two soldiers sleeping in this room.

ATTIC:

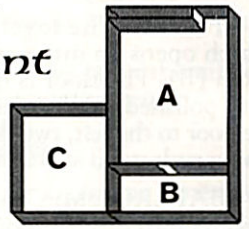
The attic is filled with a number of boxes, most which contain the various furnishings of the house, clothing, and such items normally found in an attic. To the left of the stairs a large pile of weapons sorted by type sits. There are 12 pole arms, 17 short swords, 4 long bows, 200 flight arrows, 6 hand axes, and 3 maces. None are magical.

When the PCs move into the attic, note to them that "the floor creaks ominously." If the PCs continue to move about the attic, one PC (in the center of the attic) will suddenly fall through the floor. If the PC makes a successful Dexterity Roll, he will be able to prevent himself from falling to the ballroom floor. If he fails, he will plummet the 40 plus feet to the marble floor below suffering 4d6 points of damage.

BASEMENT:

A—STORAGE: This is a dark, dank storage room complete with dirt floor. The walls are made of piled stone with mortar between the gaps. A single door leads to the Wine Cellar. A pile of rags is in one corner (nothing of importance). The lower left corner is the home of a number of broken furnishings (chairs, tables, etc). Behind this large pile is a secret door that swings inward. This door leads to the Secret Room (C).

B—WINE CELLAR: This room leads off of the basement storage room. Its walls are lined with wine shelving, with most spots empty. However, a few bottles remain (average quality).



Basement

C—SECRET ROOM: Formerly a treasury room, this room has two entrances: One from the basement storage room, another from a tile in the ceiling which may be pushed up. The second exits to the middle of the ballroom. This is the Mirror Room; proceed to Encounter Ten.

Encounter Ten: As You Wish

As the secret door slides open you spot the mirror immediately. It is a 6' high by 6' wide affair with a gold frame. As you step into the room, the mirror glows violently and Commander Nioga steps through it. Coming through behind him are four other soldiers, a girl about 7 years in age, and a tall man with bluish skin that appears to be one of the fabled Djinn.

"You?" stammers Nioga as you step into the light of the room. With a quick motion Nioga grabs the child next to him and puts a knife to her throat. "Keep coming if you want to see her dead."

The girl is Killian Lara Blacktree, cousin of Lord Charles Blacktree. She is easily recognized as a member of the Blacktree family, and Nioga will announce her identity if they do not stop.

If the PCs stop, read the following. If any PC moves to attack or approach Nioga even after knowing who the girl is, jump to "A Mighty Ally."

"Better. Now, are you sure this is what you want? After all, I can make you very rich... yes, very rich indeed. Imagine having as much money as you desired... now imagine more. Or better yet, imagine a weapon of such craftsmanship as to be the envy of all living creatures... or what of power? What if you were the most powerful mage in all of the world?"

"That's what I offer you... your dreams incarnate. All I have mentioned and more can be yours. Imagine that... money, power, magic, all for you...can't you see it? Feel it? All yours! And you need do nothing. I shall give it to you for NO WORK WHATSOEVER! All you need do is nothing."

"Here's my offer... Tell me what it is you most desire in all of this world, and I shall grant it. And once I have granted your wish, you only have stand aside and allow me and my army through.... A simple deal. Do you accept?"

Only one wish is allowed. ANY PC who speaks up may make the wish, regardless of the party. The wish cannot in any way affect Nioga's plans; Nioga will alter the wording of a wish so that the PC gets what he or she wants and the consequences don't stop him from conquering the city. Be inventive.

The Genie is unable to grant a wish which kills or resurrects any creature.

As Nioga hears the wish, he will turn to the Djinni, restate the wish as necessary, and add: "while removing my enemies from my path." Once the wish has been stated to the Djinni, jump to "Failure" below.

If the PCs do not accept the wish, continue with "A Mighty Ally."

A Mighty Ally

"Have it your way," screams Nioga. With that, he shoves the girl at you and turns to the Djinni: "Genie, grant me a wish. I wish that a mighty creature would appear to fight at my side."

"As you wish," the Djinni says and suddenly vanishes.

Almost as soon as the Djinni has vanished the floor beneath you begins to shake wildly. You watch in horror as the dirt beneath you sinks and falls away in chunks. With a final violent upheaval the rest of the floor lets go and you plummet into nothingness.

Your fall is quickly interrupted as you plunge into crisp cool water and then hit soft sand. You break the surface to find yourself in a large cavern. Overhead you see the remains of the room from which you just fell. The cavern is filled by a strange green light the appears to glow from the lake in which you stand.

Yet, these things are not that upsetting. Not when you consider the strange purplish, multiheaded beast which regards you. There is no doubt to you what is going through the creature's thoughts. Each set of eyes reveals everything. Dinner has just fallen from the sky.

The PCs have all fallen in water (4' deep) in front of the cryohydra. The cryohydra is on the beach. Behind the cryohydra the PCs can see the mirror which has landed safely in the sand. Nioga and four elite soldiers are in the water to the right of the PCs. Nioga is the farthest away from the PCs and the four guards separate him from the PCs.

The cryohydra will fight the PCs and ignore Nioga and the guards. However, the cryohydra will not protect the soldiers either, nor take orders from Nioga.

Elite Soldier (4), human F5: Int Average; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; hp 36; THAC0 15; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6+2 (Short Sword); SA specialized in short sword; SD nil; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 17.

Possesions: leather armor, short sword

Commander Nioga, elf W10/F10: Int High; AL LE; AC 1; MV 12; HD 8; hp 64; THAC0 10; #AT 2; Dmg D8+4; SA nil; SD see magic items; MR nil; SZ M (6'); ML 17.

Magical items: Rapier +2, elven chainmail, ring of resistance to divination, ring of mind shielding.

Spells (4/4/3/2/2): sleep, magic missile (x2), spook, glitterdust, invisibility, web, scare, dispel magic, fireball, lightning bolt, Evard's black tentacles, enervation, cone of cold, chaos.

Cryohydra: Int Average; AL N; AC 5; MV 12; HD 10; hp 90 (8 per head, 10 in body; THAC0 10; #AT 10; Dmg 1d8 (bite); SA nil; SD see below; MR nil; SZ GM (30' long); ML 17.

Attacks on body have no effect unless damage is greater than 45 points. Up to 4

Bormark Rothjansen
6th Level Human Male Ranger

STR:	17	Ht: 5' 10"
DEX:	13	Wt: 165 lbs
CON:	14	Age: 27
INT:	13	Hair/Eyes: Br/Bl
WIS:	16	Skin: Tanned
CHR:	11	Alignment: CG

AC Normal: 5 AC Rear: 5
THAC0: 15 Hit Points: 56

Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Hand/Throwing Axe, Long Bow, Lasso, Knife, Single Weapon Style Specialization

Non-weapon Proficiencies: Animal Lore (13), Herbalism (11), Mountaineering, Read/Write Common (14), Riding–Horse (19), Rope Use (13), Set Snares (12), Tracking (18)

Languages: Common

Magical Items: Long Bow +1; Studded Leather +2; Potion of Extra-Healing; matching pair of Hand Axes +1

Possessions: long sword, 50' rope, quiver with 20 arrows, 2 throwing axes, knife, 4 sets of clothing for adventuring, 1 new fancy set of clothing, boots, leather gloves, belt, 2 belt pouches, small sack, 5 spikes, 10 pitons, 4 crampons, flint and steel, whetstone, silver symbol of Mielikki, waterskin, hooded lantern, 4 flasks lamp oil, pipe (which you cannot play), warm cloak, backpack, bedroll, iron pot for cooking, 4 flasks acid carefully packed (for trolls), 28 gp, 31 sp

Role-Playing Notes:

Your mother died of an illness just after you were born. You were raised by her older sister. This aunt had no other children and was happy to raise you as her own son. During this happy childhood your desire to help others showed itself in your defending friends against bullies, in rescuing small animals from traps, etc. Your aunt was a ranger and taught you all she knew. When you exceeded her knowledge, you were sent to a ranger friend of hers in the nearby Dales (a region across the Dragon Reach from Ravens Bluff) to complete your training.

This ranger was a Harper, and encouraged your desire to help those less fortunate while instilling Harper doctrine in you. At age 18, you craved adventure, so your mentor sent you to

Shadowdale to contact some Harpers. Thus you embarked on an adventuring career. Three years ago you fell in with this group. They were attempting to thwart the plans of some Red Wizards and their troll allies, and your timely arrival and woodland skills brought success. You have traveled with them since. Your species enemy is troll.

As a Harper, you constantly try to figure out what everyone is doing. Curious by nature, you are particularly adept at eavesdropping. Since you are impulsive and determined, as soon as you overhear of an evil plot you try to persuade your friends to do something about it. You are generally cheerful and have a talent for command.

Loremaster Di-Thil Sturn–The priesthood of Oghma suits him. Since Oghma is the god of knowledge and bards you know Di-Thil will support your Harper goals. The man has an annoying habit of offering advice when not asked, though it's usually worth hearing.

Catherine of Agnost–She is amazing with her swords. She's the best fighter you've ever encountered. She is quite pretty; you have a crush on her. She doesn't talk to you as much as she used to, and doesn't know that you feel anything for her.

Palithar of Erenbora–Basically a harmless kid, or middle aged elf actually, but he still acts like a kid. You worry that he will stumble on some trouble that he can't handle.

Raspathir Endoc–A good leader, magician, and strategist; your best friend in the group. He is usually amenable to suggestion and treats you like a second-in-command. You wondered why he wasn't a fighter until you saw him practice.

T'zzarr't ("Zar")–He notices a lot, and is a good thief. You must convince him that non-paying missions are worthwhile. The cause of good does not always yield material rewards.

heads may attack a single opponent at a time. Each head is able to breath a 10' wide by 20' long stream of frost that inflicts 8 points of damage, save versus breath weapon for half damage.

Outcomes

There are several possible outcomes to this battle: If Nioga is reduced by more than half his hit points, he will attempt to flee into the mirror. If he succeeds, he escapes (but does not take the mirror with him). If the mirror has already been recovered by the party, Nioga will surrender.

The cryohydra fights as long as Nioga is present and alive. It disappears once he escapes or dies. A *dispel magic* spell would have to best 18th level magic to send the creature away (it was summoned with a *wish*). The men fight or surrender depending on whether Nioga surrenders or not (if he does, they do).

Once the battle is over, jump to the appropriate section below: "Escape" or "Surrender." If a PC chooses to destroy the mirror, immediately jump to "Destroyed."

Destroyed

As the mirror is shattered, all of its magic is released in an immense explosion. The PC who destroyed the mirror suffers 3d10 magical damage (no save). Everyone else suffers 4d4 damage(save for half).

If the mirror is destroyed, Nioga will surrender immediately. Go to "Surrender," and adjust appropriately.

Outcome One: Failure

The Genie looks at you, winks, and the world goes black. When you wake up you find the wish has indeed been granted. Things are definitely different. You also realize that you are back in Mossbridges, lying in the street. Around you people scamper about. A news boy down the street can be heard calling out the day's report: "Ravens Bluff falls! Ravens Bluff falls! Traitors sought by town elders!"

Regardless of who asked for the wish, any PC ***who benefitted in any way*** from the wish is now an enemy of Ravens Bluff.

The End

Outcome Two: Escape

The last attacker finally falls and you take a moment to look around. The four soldiers lie where they died. The cryohydra's heads are strewn across the beach, and the body shivers slightly with the last pangs of death. Nioga is nowhere to be seen, but the mirror is. You have succeeded, partially. Nioga escaped, and the invasion has been delayed... for now.

The End

Outcome Three: Surrender

Nioga begs and pleads for his freedom, but you remain undeterred and bind him securely. Eventually you manage to depart the cavern and Nioga's home. You are greeted by cheers from the Knights of the Hawk as they flood the street and take Nioga away. Jathan strides up to you with a immense smile upon his face.

"You have fought well today! The mirror will be been given to General Obespieri and our forces will soon overrun the enemy camp. By morning there shall be almost nothing left of the enemy! You are truly heroes of the city. But even a hero deserves a rest now and then. Go home, go dry off... you have done your duty."

Each PC Knight of the Hawk will receive a Feather of Honor from the Knights of the Hawk. All of Nioga's equipment will be turned over to the PCs for their services. This includes his *rapier +2*, his *elven chainmail +2*, and two rings (*ring of mind shielding, ring of resistance to divination*).

Epilogue

The capture or death of Nioga brings the reward promised by General Obspieri: 1,000 gp per PC involved and a commission in the army at the rank of private, for any PC who wants it. Knights are not eligible, as they already have positions in the army which rank above private.

The rescue of Lord Blacktree's cousin, Killian Lara Blacktree, earns a reward of one potion of healing each from Lord Blacktree, from his personal stores.

The End

A Band of Rings

Ornaments for Four Fingers

by Nathan Caroland

Members sometimes send us gems. This time one of our members sent us a collection of rings (some of which contain gems). Any of these might be a useful addition to your home campaign.

Ring of Assassins

Description: These rings are made of a black ore alloy, with a large, thick band fashioned in the resemblance of a striking asp. Between the asp's opened fangs is a small, multi-faceted diamond.

Dweomers: These rings are quite deadly. The dweomer allows the wearer to touch any liquid or food and turn it poisonous. The wearer must mentally or verbally command the ring to infect the substance. The poison will be undetectable to taste, smell, or color, though not to magical detection. The wearer must submerge the ring within a poison for it to duplicate a poison. The ring's diamond turns momentarily black when its power is used.

Lore: These rings are far and few to be found, their origin and magic used within the creation are secrets jealously kept. There are rumors as to another ring of assassins that can kill upon touch, though accounts of this have not been verified.

Ring of Demi-Humans

Description: These rings are commonly found in different settings, band types, and metals, though they always have a black, opaque pearl that seems to turn green when looked at in differing lighting. The pearls' origins are unknown.

Dweomers: These rings empower the wearer with the abilities of the Demi-Human race that the ring is associated with, thus allowing a differing race the abilities innate to the race and the fluent use of their language. They give no special abilities to a wearer of the same race of the ring.

Ring's Racial Alignment (d100)	
01-25	Halfling
26-50	Dwarven
51-75	Gnomish
76-100	Elvish

DMs may also choose to add subraces (accounting for the differing lines and bloods of these races.)

Lore: These rings were created long ago by the "Circle of Nine", a collection of the mightiest mages of the time. War ravaged the land and boundaries were being established. The new races feared and hated what they did not understand. These mages created the rings in hopes that peace and understanding could be established between the races. Whether or not these rings helped established peace is unknown, though understanding was achieved in one way or another, for good or ill. Today these rings are scattered across the land, their make and magic lost to time.

Ring of Keys

Description: These rings are large signet rings made of a silver and gold alloy with either a large red or green multi-faceted crystal embedded outward. The alloy makes for a unnatural swirl of gold and silver throughout the band. The band will fit any finger comfortably.

Dweomers: This ring is a favorite among the unscrupulous who have need to open locks without proper keys. The bands come in two differing strengths, either ruby or emerald.

Upon command, the ring will emit a key shaped beam of light. The key beam can then be inserted within a lock and opened. The powers differ in strength between the gems. Percentile dice must be rolled in order to determine if the lock has been successfully opened.

Rings' Chance of Opening Doors	
Ruby Ring	50%
Emerald Ring	85%

If a result of 00 is rolled in the attempt to open the door, the ring's beam automatically opens the door; the gem within the ring shatters, however, and the magic is lost. These rings cannot open magically sealed doors.

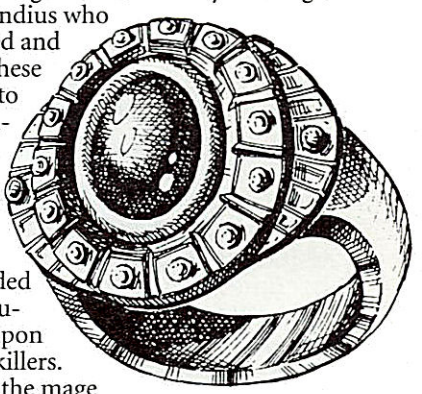
Lore: These rings are rumored to be gifts from the God of Thieves, given to thieves and clerics who have performed an outstanding duty. The ring can be used by any class, however.

Ring of Revenge

Description: This thin braided ring is always made out of silver and is only large enough to fit the average person's little finger. It neither expands nor shrinks to fit different fingers, though smaller individuals may wear it upon another finger. Within the silver band are runes, not discernible unless *read magic* is cast upon it. The inscription says "Death will not stay my hand."

Dweomers: The magic of these rings are potent, though cursed. When the wearer of the ring dies, his soul is instantly turned toward undeath, creating a ghost out of the ring wearer. The ghost arises within three rounds. It instantly knows its killer and retains all memories. The ghost instantly gains both the powers and the restraints allotted to others of its kind, though it has a base chance of retaining its original alignment (15%), if the ghost fails this roll, its alignment instantly shifts to Neutral Evil.

Lore: The construction and magic of these rings were devised by the mage, Mistandius who created and sold these rings to adventurers who intended retribution upon their killers. What the mage didn't inform them of was the side effect that granted the wearer its chance at revenge. Ironically, Mistandius met his death when he was beset by the ghosts of adventurers he himself killed, forgetting that he had sold them the rings some years back. The secret of constructing such rings was lost with his death.



❑

Island Campaigns

Part 2: Sea to Shining Sea

A World of Your Own

by Roger E. Moore

Having moved to a new city far from his old gaming group, Luis wants to start an AD&D® campaign that he hopes will attract a new gaming group. Getting the word out will be easy; he'll advertise on bulletin boards in local hobby shops and over local modem-accessed BBSs for gamers. However, creating a unique campaign with high appeal and staying power can be hard.

Hearing that most local groups are running "traditional" fantasy campaigns, Luis chooses to give his campaign a special flavor to draw players looking for a change. He likes tales and movies about Caribbean pirates in the 17th century, so he decides to put together a high-seas campaign based in a large island chain on an oceanic world. With the help of a couple of books on Caribbean history, Luis designs a background that parallels to some extent the exploration and settlement of the islands, with many elements of high adventure and combat.

In this column, we follow Luis's design work on his world as an example of an island-based campaign setting. In particular, we look at the element of ***storytelling***, particularly in the historical background, as critical to the campaign's set-up. Rather than plunk down a map of a bunch of islands, deck them out with monsters and treasure, then toss in the characters and expect the campaign to run itself, Luis tells the tale of how things came to be, and lets the PCs finish the story. If a background history is rich, exciting, and filled with adventure hooks, the campaign really *will* run itself, with the players eagerly taking part in the festivities.

World of the Great Sea

Luis's campaign world, Oeyan, is Earth-sized, with a huge continent, Zuria, in the southern hemisphere. Here dwell many standard races and monsters of the AD&D game, with the most magically or technically adept races organized into fiercely competitive kingdoms or federations. The political set-up is reminiscent of Europe c. 1700, with ferocious wars breaking out between fast-expanding, power-hungry empires.

The rest of the world is covered by a titanic ocean filled with tiny islands, until one gets to the northern hemisphere on the side of the world opposite Zuria. Here lies Boreos, a minor continent the size of Australia, with mountain- and jungle-covered coasts, a desert-and-prairie interior, and an extensive island chain on its western coast. Ships setting sail from northeastern Zuria can catch strong ocean currents and favorable winds to reach the island chain, collectively called the Antipodes, then the minor continent Boreos. The fastest return trip is to either head eastward again from southern Boreos along the equator, to land somewhere in northern Zuria, or to catch a counterclockwise-turning ocean current that eventually brings the ship back to northeastern Zuria (though it will be a cold trip).

Down-to-Earth Models

An island, for our purposes, is a body of land less than one million square miles, surrounded by water. Real-world islands vary greatly, ranging from huge, frozen, barely populated Greenland to tiny, tropical, heavily populated Oahu. Some island clusters are governed as single nations, like Japan, Madagascar, and the Philippines, or as many separate nations, like the Greater and Lesser Antilles of the Caribbean Sea. A large island might hold several nations itself, though usually only two.

A DM can model an island campaign after one or more real-world islands with relative ease. The DM can draw out island maps while preserving similarities to real places, then write up a history of the region that mirrors in some ways the real history of the model. Fantasy elements can always be substituted for real ones: Modern nations become kingdoms or empires, and different ethnic, religious, or political groups of humans become fantasy races. Spells, spellcasters, magical items, and artifacts can take the place of technology. The DM is also free to add new elements that make the campaign diverge from the model in many more ways—spell-jamming, gates, unexpected events, and so forth.

The nations of Zuria have been aware of the existence of Boreos and the Antipodes for only 200 years, when a lone ship returned to port with wild tales of a land beyond the ends of the Great Sea. Subsequent voyages revealed the full extent of this new realm, and exploitation followed exploration almost at once.

Luis loosely based his world's history on that of our own world, with particular attention to the discovery and settlement of the islands of the Caribbean Sea. (The Antipodes are based on the Greater and Lesser Antilles; Boreos is loosely based on South and Central America.) The background Luis developed provides many adventure hooks and explains how things came to be as they are.

History: Before the coming of the Zurians, the Antipodes and the coasts of Boreos were inhabited by many tribes of lizard men, bullywugs, and aarakocra. These groups continually skirmished with one another; the aggressive lizard men dominated the savage bullywugs, and the peaceful aarakocra avoiding contact with both whenever possible. All had migrated to this region from Zuria thousands of years before.

Then a small fleet of four hobgoblin-crewed ships from the Gothmarian Imperium appeared, making landfall on a few islands and killing some of the lizard men as trophies. The ships had become separated from a large war fleet during a hurricane, and the crews were able to resupply and repair their fleet before attempting to return to Zuria on the northern current. Only one ship survived the return journey, thanks to storms, starvation, and sea monsters. Its crew's tales, however, ignited a fire in the minds of hobgoblin royalty, engaged in a bitter struggle against the elven-dominated High Kingdom of Yerendeon, the humans' Two Suns Empire, and the gnome-and-halfling Diara Federation. Perhaps the new lands, however distant, held the riches and resources the Gothmarians needed to triumph over their foes. Numerous hobgoblin fleets were dispatched in rapid succession to conquer and loot these lands at all costs.

The hobgoblins arrived in the Antipodes in force, battling every tribe they met and attempting to enslave natives to dig mines for precious metals and gems. Magical diseases introduced by hobgoblin priests decimated native tribes that fought back, and carnivorous apes—long used by the Gothmarians as shock troops and now introduced to the Antipodes to root out bullywug enclaves—took control of many island jungles and swamps.

The lives of those enslaved were no better. Thousands of lizard men and bullywugs died in hobgoblin mines from cave-ins, dehydration, or malnutrition. The treatment given slaves was unrelentingly cruel, and rebellions were brutally suppressed, with mass executions always following a rebellion's end. As the unlucky natives died out, their lands were soon overrun by boars and cattle brought in by the meat-eating Gothmarians as food animals.

Luck was not entirely with the Gothmarians, however. Local diseases ravaged the hobgoblins as well, and the mines on the islands soon played out and were abandoned. The enslaved natives who survived mistreatment were rebellious and untrustworthy, and uprisings became increasingly common and more difficult to put down. Worse, the aarakocra now cooperated with rebel lizard men and even some bullywugs, and native tactics grew more sophisticated. The natives were masters of poisons and traps, even if their magic was no match for that of the Gothmarians. Most annoying of all, the ships of other Zurian kingdoms reached the Antipodes, and the elves, humans, and others gave aid to the natives and attacked Gothmarian shipping from hidden bases on the islands.

Then Gothmarian explorers discovered enormous deposits of gold, silver, and gems in the coastal mountains of Boreos. The strikes were so huge that they beggared the imagination; within a year, the royal treasuries in Great Gothmar overflowed with riches. Gothmarian estates in the Antipodes were nearly abandoned as the hobgoblins swiftly migrated to Boreos and set up vast slave mines and refining plants, sending house slaves, war prisoners, and criminals from their empire on Zuria to work and die alongside captured Antipodeans. (They'll enslave PCs as well, of course.)

Piracy against Gothmarian treasure ships increased greatly once news of the strikes spread over the world. Elven and human sea captains in particular became notorious for their exploits against the Imperium, and some became renegades who attacked all shipping wherever it was found, even that of their home nations. In response, Gothmarian colonies and mines began fortifying themselves and constructing elaborate wall and tunnel defenses.

About this time, Gothmarians discovered a species of pepper native to the Antipodes that proved as irresistible to them as sugar is to humans and halflings. Enterprising Gothmarians immediately set up plantations to grow and process "skullburner" peppers, using slave labor from every source to perform the backbreaking chores. Many ex-soldiers now retire to such estates, which they run with ruthless efficiency.

More trouble was in the wind. An explosive, magical mineral called *fulzer* was then discovered in huge quantities on Boreos. When refined, *fulzer* could be used with *smoke powder* firearms, which were known but only rarely used on Zuria because of their inherent dangers and the difficulty in making *smoke powder*. With vast quantities of easily refined *fulzer* available, the Gothmarians developed firearms and explosives technology at a rapid pace. Hobgoblin soldiers, backed by spellcasting priests and equipped with the best armor, muskets, swords, and pistols that money could buy, soon pushed back the forces of other races, expanding and tightening the Gothmarian grip on the Antipodes and Boreos. The Gothmarian Imperium was suddenly able to hold its own (or even make considerable advances) in its wars against other kingdoms on Zuria as well. Only the powerful magic, fighting skill, and willpower of the other races can ensure their freedom.

You can see how detailed history almost completely sets up the tone and feel of the campaign...

Current Campaign Set-Up: Luis's campaign begins 50 years after the discovery of *fulzer* on Boreos, when every kingdom and island is threatened by gun-toting, cannon-using hobgoblins. You can see how detailed history almost completely sets up the tone and feel of the campaign; the history is like the first part of a novel, which the players can complete in any manner they like.

The PCs can be humans, elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, or halflings if they want to be from Zuria, but Luis also allows PCs from the Antipodes and Boreos, using *The Complete Book of Humanoids*. In the latter case, aarakocra,

advanced bullywugs, and lizard men are allowed. Standard rules for generating characters are followed, though Luis includes additional cultural information affecting the creation of each character. For instance, gnomes and halflings control several huge merchant houses, so any class and kit that logically derives from exploration and trade is allowed and perhaps expanded. Aarakocra, bullywugs, and lizard men are generally uncivilized, so most would be barbarians or related kits as appropriate; however, some individuals might have gone to Zuria and received better training and education, allowing other kits. The *Shaman* optional accessory might be useful in detailing Antipodes religions.

Hobgoblins from the Gothmarian Imperium can gain classes and levels as per *The Complete Book of Humanoids*, but all must be NPCs. They are civilized (if brutal, tyrannical, and cruel), and they have firearms technology up to the level of flintlocks, as per *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Combat & Tactics*, chapter seven, with any armor up to full plate. Outfitting hobgoblin NPCs is easy, since their empire is so rich that it can afford to turn its soldiers into walking arsenals. Luis uses the ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™ volumes to outfit Gothmarian spellcasters and treasure hoards. Hobgoblins are rich but have only limited abilities to produce magical items or cast high-level spells; lately, though, they can steal whatever they want from other kingdoms and races, and thus lack very little.

Gothmarians have trained a plains-dwelling species of giant boar to serve as mounts and pack animals, though the creatures have awful tempers and sometimes go berserk in combat. Carnivorous apes, taken young from the jungles of Zuria and raised as pets and servants by Gothmarians, are also commonly found in regions settled by hobgoblins. True goblins are common slaves of the Gothmarians, and they are often encountered in large numbers on skull-burner pepper plantations or in local militias under hobgoblin commanders.

Elven PCs never use (and can barely tolerate) firearms, as the noise and smell are extremely offensive to them. Gnomes and halflings can use pistols without trouble, though both hands are required for aimed shots. Dwarves dislike pistols and muskets but have an interest in *fulzer* siege weapons and explosives, for warfare and mining purposes. Humans will readily use any weapon they discover, firearms included. Firearms are not yet manufactured in great quantity by any people but hobgoblins, so weapons must be seized in battle from dead or disabled Gothmarians.

Seafaring kits and proficiencies (particularly Swimming) are made available to all PCs, even spellcasters. Some characters might even inherit small sailing vessels, own small boats or naval equipment, or gain favors from ship captains or crew. Luis creates deck plans for several types of sailing ships for use in his adventures, and he does his best to dispel player unease over sea travel by not having the PCs' ships sink every adventure. Adventures most often take place on the islands themselves, though ships might be treatened by hurricanes, pirates, Gothmarians, sea monsters, giant sharks, or evil undersea races like scrags or merrow. Plastic model kits of sailing ships add great flavor to gaming sessions.

A World of Your Own

What of the PCs' goals? PCs might choose to become privateers, paid by their home governments to prey on Gothmarian ships and renegade pirates. They can attempt to set up their own island kingdom—hardly impossible given the chaos of the times, as islands are conquered and reconquered by different forces every other year. They might become true pirates, raiding any and all ships around, or they could form mercenary marine companies and attack Gothmarian islands, mines, forts, and ships in swift, commando-style raids. Some PCs might even wish to become merchant princes or smuggler lords, hauling valuable cargoes from island to island. They can play out their adventures against the great canvas of history that Luis provided, and they can eventually determine the outcome of the great war against the Gothmarian Imperium, for good or ill.

Last Notes: Luis's Gothmarians combine the worst elements of the colonial-era Spanish, English, French, and Dutch with a few unique sins of their own. Though they compete with each other in many ways, the humans, demihumans, and other PCs races of his campaign are still united by an extremely dangerous common foe that might ultimately enslave or destroy them all. Great courage, daring, and skill are called for, and Luis's island campaign lacks nothing in the realm of thrills and wild exploits. ❑

Next month:

"Islands" in the Outer Planes

Living the Nightmare

by Gary Labrecque

While much has been written (and rightly so) about the nature of horror and how to write horror scenarios, little attention has been paid on how to play horror RPGs. I know of only one system whose rulebook gives any advice to players. Consequently, first-time players tend to sit back and let more experienced players take the lead, even if their character is supposed to be out-spoken, a planner, or the party leader. While it is probably unwise for a beginner to get certain characters (Dr. Van Helsing types for example), there is still much that they can contribute to the game.

This article explores playing horror RPGs. First, I discuss the survivability of characters. Then, I offer four tips that could keep characters alive a little longer. Those interested in the LIVING DEATH campaign or involved in a horror campaign of their own should find these particularly useful.

Survival Is Secondary...

Let's get one thing straight right away—characters die in horror role-playing games, despite players' best efforts. Sometimes the horror is just too great, too terrible, too fast. Even a creature who seems weak could overpower and kill a character if met at the wrong time. My wife still bemoans the time when her doctor, who survived dozens of dangerous encounters with hideous Cthulhu monsters, succumbed to a pack of renegade, killer cherry tomatoes.

In most horror systems, characters are fairly weak. They are everyday people forced to combat the horrors they encounter. They are vulnerable to potentially crippling emotions at times when survival requires strong action. Remember, it is HORROR, and in horror, characters die or have their lives permanently changed—not always for the better.

In tournament play, time can be the deciding factor on whether a character lives or dies. If characters move too slowly, they could run out of time in the round. They could also run out of game time (especially if the tournament has an internal clock guiding when events occur). In either case, they may be forced to battle the horror when they are ill-prepared. Alternatively, characters can move too quickly and miss something vital to their survival. They arrive at the climax unprepared and unknowingly have already sealed their fate.

...Role-Playing Is Not

So if it's difficult to build up characters in horror RPGs, why do so many people enjoy horror role-playing games? The answer is in the role-playing itself. Since horror RPGs are dangerous, combat is minimized and role-playing encounters are more prominent. In order to draw out emotions and get feel the horror, players must relate to their characters and be pulled into the storyline; this is best accomplished by encouraging role-playing.

Many find role-playing easy in horror RPGs. Most characters are taken from easily recognizable stereotypes. Since most systems are set in a modified "real" world that are based on a real time period of our history, the setting is also familiar. Consequently, players can draw from their own experiences when bringing their character to life.

Through investigation of the menace, characters frequently become changed by the horrors they experience. In Call of Cthulhu, investigators are driven towards insanity by what they uncover. In RAVENLOFT® and LIVING DEATH campaigns, characters can be physically altered by their own actions. Characters suffer from fear and horror reactions in every horror system. Each change gives the player a new opportunity to role-play. Many *Cthulhu* players enjoy having their investigators go insane.

Parties in horror RPGs tend not be a unified, happy party. Personal dislikes, squabbles, mismatched couples, etc. are more fun for players and help characters come alive. Some of the best scenarios give players ample time to interact early on. The horror plotline is gradually interjected, allowing players to let their characters react without stopping role-playing. Interactions become more intense as tension increases.

While characters in horror RPGs tend to die quickly, there are some steps you can take to increase your character's longevity. While I can't guarantee that they will help in every situation, they will cut down on needless deaths.

Learn What You're Up Against

Learn what you are up against before you encounter it. Do background research first. Check evidence left at crime scenes and other locations of interest. Search the library for any information; you might discover an obscure reference that could help. Has anyone encountered a similar creature before (and lived to tell about it)? Does that gypsy, fortuneteller, or medium living nearby have any useful information? You won't find out unless you check. A player might know that silver bullets are needed to destroy a werewolf, but his character might not unless he researches

first. Your chances of success might be slim, but without advanced research you have none at all. Know your adversary.

At the other extreme is a common pitfall for beginners: over-investigation. A judge can hand players a summary of a thorough investigation and some will search the location again, and again, and again.... Much valuable time in a round can be lost this way. Many times if it is not obvious or found during the first thorough search, it is just NOT THERE. Take the most obvious clues and follow them up; only look for something truly obscure if you have no other options.

You Need a Plan

Groups rarely succeed by accident. They usually have well thought out and well executed plans. While not all plans work—and even if they do, not everyone may survive—big deal! Modify plans as you go. The trick is to keep your heads when things go wrong. A good judge will use every trick he can come up with to keep you from thinking, and force you to react emotionally.

One tournament that I wrote over five years ago has had only ONE table survive it intact (and it's played at quite a few conventions). Until that group came around, I thought it was one of those "escape with your lives" tournaments, but they proved me wrong. What they did, and nobody else did, was calmly come up with a solid, flawless plan that could not help but work. Yes, there was some luck involved, but 99.9% of it was intelligence and forethought.

The movie *Tremors* is a wonderful example of characters coming up with a plan and modifying as they go. By using their heads, a rag-tag group defeated intelligent monsters that could learn and adapt. When you play a horror RPG, remember what Fred Ward's character said, "You need to plan ahead."

Avoid Unnecessary Combat

Combat should always be the last course of action. Unlike fantasy RPGs, one cannot expect to solve most problem by direct assault. Many monsters will laugh and thank you for the opportunity to destroy the entire party at once. Do not expect to defeat a Darklord or a Great Old One by force; it's just not going to happen.

Concepts such as balanced encounters do not apply to horror role-playing games. When I set up an encounter for a tournament, I rarely count opponents and try to make it "fair" for player characters. Pick your fights wisely, when it is the only alternative.

When in doubt, run away! You cannot defeat everything, and characters can easily be overwhelmed. It is better to retreat and fight another day when you are better prepared. This preparation does not necessarily mean heavy weaponry. I know the temptation: The .45 didn't work. Let's try the M16 or the rocket launcher or,.. There are just some things that weapons do not take out—and they are generally faster than you. Remember: if you nuke Cthulhu, he comes back a few minutes later and this time he's radioactive!

Don't Separate the Party

This is a basic rule of survival for all types of RPGs. A lone character or even a small group cannot hope to survive an encounter tailored to the strength of the entire party. In horror RPGs where the adversaries can be more than a match for the party, not separating is even more vital.

Intelligent monsters cannot resist a lone character. They might not want to attack the party, but the chance to eliminate one, thereby weakening the whole, is irresistible. I played in a tournament at GENCON® Game Fair a few years ago where characters died gruesomely if they were alone for only a few seconds! No matter how much your characters dislike each other, stay together and act decisively. Characters will have a much better chance of surviving.

You would be surprised how often this tenet is ignored. The problem is that violators are not always punished. The menace might not be nearby or just too stupid to take advantage of the situation. Other times, the punishment is subtle such as alerting the enemy to your presence or losing vital clues. I cannot tell you how many times a lone character has discovered something important only to die, destroy it, or conceal it from the rest of the party until it was too late.

So what are you waiting for? Go out and play. Above all, role-play the character you have in front of you to the best of your ability, and don't let anyone intimidate you. Don't be afraid to make suggestions. Even if you are wrong, so what! Everyone is probably going to die anyway. ❑

Classifieds...

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WASHINGTON: I'm a 27-year-old player/DM looking for a group of mature gamers, 15 or older. Willing to travel to game. Would also enjoy pen pals. I am very familiar with AD&D 2nd Ed., Megatraveller, and Rifts; I have campaigns for all three. Also familiar Hero Quest, V&V, and Shadowrun. Contact Tony Leno at 360/658-8328 or write: 9532 65th Dr. NE, Marysville, WA 98270.

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Contact: Knights of the Empire,PO3041, Brooklyn NY 11202; dsamuels@aol.com

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Contact: Outpost Productions, 503 Courthouse Ave., New Boston, TX 75570; 903/628-6298

SHAUNCON XIII
When: Nov 22–24 **Where:** Kansas City, Missouri–Holiday Inn South
What's Happening: LIVING CITY, LIVING JUNGLE, Masters, Grandmasters, LIVING DEATH, Benefit, Great Plains Regional Finals. Shadowrun, Star Wars, Warhammer 40K, Vampire, M:tG, Highlander, more!
Contact: RPGKC, PO 7457, Kansas City, MO, 64116-0157, 816/455-5020.

ATCON III
When: Oct 3–6 **Where:** Austin, TX
What's Happening: 6LC, 1LJ, 1LD, DARK SUN, Champions, WoD, GURPS, Marvel Superheroes, more. Clash of the Titans Win ticket to ATSea '97!
Cost: $15 until Aug 15; $25 at the door
Contact: John Paul Carney c/o GOAT, PO 3116, Austin, TX 78764-3116; 512/443-4251

SHORECON'96
When and Where: Sept 26-29 in Asbury Park, NJ - Berkeley-Carteret Hotel
What's Happening: 15 RPGA events including one first-run LIVING CITY event and a LIVING DEATH Interactive, and LIVING JUNGLE, Call of Cthulhu, RAVENLOFT. 150+ gaming events including a Magic Pro Tour qualifier and board, card, miniatures games.
Special guests: Connie Willis and Lissanne Lake (Dragon cover artist)
Cost: $20 adv (by Sept 10), $25 at door, single day rates vary
Contact: Multigenre, Inc. 266 Spruce Drive, Brick, NJ 08723-6528 908/262-9249, info@multigenre.com, http://www.multigenre.com

SOONERCON 12
When: Nov 22–24
Where: OKC, OK– Clarion/Comfort Inn
What's Happening: art show, open and tournament RPGA, Battletech, Starfleet Battles, M:tG, guests Kim Stanley Robinson, Bob Eggleton, David Lee Anderson.
Cost: $18 til Sept 30, $22 til Nov 5
Contact: SoonerCon, PO 892687, Oklahoma City, OK 73189-2687. 405/769-4417

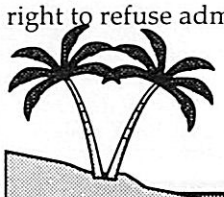
AT Sea 1997 — April 5 - 12, 1997

Experience gaming on the open sea! — This is a cruise unlike any other!

You will be sailing from New Orleans on the Commodore Cruise Line's S.S. Enchanted Isle with stops in Playa del Carmen, Cozumel, Grand Cayman and Montego Bay, Jamaica. Unlike other cruise conventions, G.O.A.T. will provide scheduled games. Over 16 game slots including: Sanctioned RPGA Team Decathlon, and many Living Events, Dragonlance 5th Age, Birthright, INWO, and Vampire. Hear guest speakers including **Jean Rabe**; participate in planned activities and much, much more.

Inside cabin - $1,399* & $1,099[1] • Outside cabin - $1,499* & $1,199[1]

Rates include: cruise, entertainment, registration fee, games, port fees, taxes, and all meals. Suites and deluxe suites are available at higher cost. Special Rates for Groups: Some rooms will hold up to four individuals, the first two pay full price, the third and/or fourth person receives 30%off full price! (Deposit remains the same.) Deposit of $250 per person due by Nov. 1, 1996 to hold reservation. Only check or money order accepted for deposit, make payable to G.O.A.T. (**Deposit non-refundable**). Discounts for game masters (must run four events). VISA/MC, check or money order accepted for remainder. Remainder due by Jan. 25, 1997. G.O.A.T. reserves the right to refuse admittance to anyone. ***With air fare in continental US** [1]**Cruise only**



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To register for ATSea, send check or money order: G.O.A.T.
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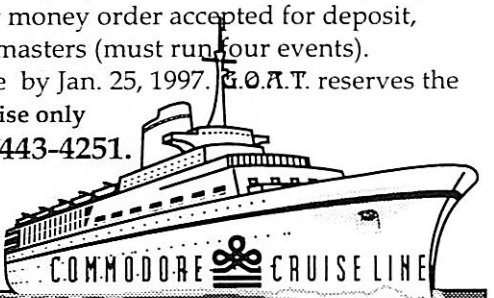

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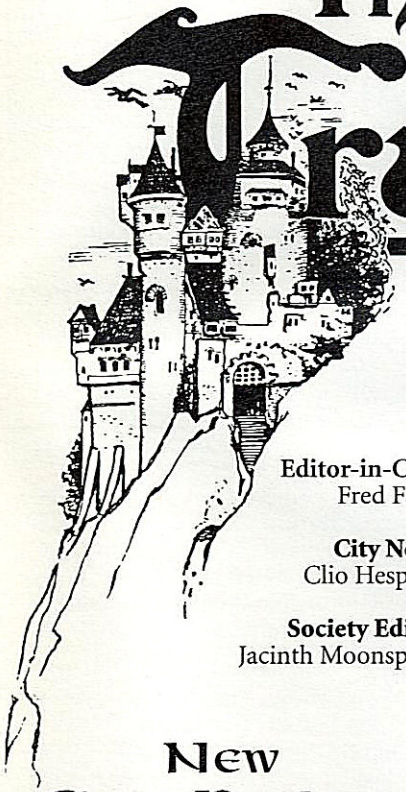
The Ravens Bluff Trumpeter



Editor-in-Chief
Fred Faber

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Society Editor:
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New Chief Prelate Appointed

The Clerical Circle appointed Relarn Dayspring, High Morninglord of the Temple of Lathander, to the post of Chief Prelate of Ravens Bluff recently vacated by the untimely demise of Sirrus Melandor of the temple of Tyr.

Sirrus Melandor, the previous Chief Prelate, served nobly for more than 14 years. His gentle influence brought an era of cooperation among the civic temples that has not been seen since the Circle's founding.

Dayspring's appointment shocked and angered followers of Tempus, who expected that their high priest, Carlos "Bloodstrike" deVentura, would lead the city's faiths.

Priests of Tempus walked out of the meeting as soon as results were released, shouting that no priest of Tempus would ever again sit on the Clerical Circle. Followers of Tempus staged demonstrations across the city, their umbrage clear to all.

Relarn Dayspring has been the High Morninglord of Lathander for many years, and is a charismatic man, well-loved by his church and other members of the Circle.

An aide to the former Chief Prelate defended the decision that Dayspring was chosen saying "the city needs to be led by a vision of hope, not of conflict and destruction."

Belanor Jailed
Charm Spells Suspected

A recent City Watch investigation of Deputy Mayor Belanor Fenmarel unearthed information which led to his conviction for treason.

According to a sources, Judge Rupert T. Hangman was suspicious of Belanor's quick rise to power in the city. Soon after Lord Mayor Charles O'Kane's abduction, Hangman recruited some of the city's adventurers to conduct a private investigation to determine whether Belanor was involved in the kidnapping.

Sufficient evidence was presented, and Belanor was taken into custody as he returned from a "peace council" with the leader of the enemy forces, Warlord Myrkyssa Jelan.

This story's real roots, however, stretch back to the Winter Festival, when Belanor mysteriously swept Lady Katherine Marie Moorland off her feet and married her under Field Marshal Lord Charles Blacktree's nose. Stories circulated in the adventuring community of *charm* spells and *philters of love*, but none of these were proved until now. Lady Katherine and her husband, Lord Blacktree, came forward to speak with Trumpeter reporters after Belanor's arrest. "We were secretly married all the time," Lord Blacktree stated. "I have always been suspicious of Fenmarel, and so Katherine and I arranged for her 'marriage' to the man so that she could keep an eye on him."

"He is a very charming man, and quite attentive," Lady Katherine said, "but underneath there is a certain unctuousness which I found distasteful. He made many deals with his adventuring friends, some of ill-repute, promising them power. In addition, he received frequent communications by magical means from outside the city."

Complications arose when further evidence showed that Belanor might have been under the effects of a *charm* spell, making his treasonous activities involuntary. Hangman took this into account, sentencing Belanor to life imprisonment on Golden Ball over a sentence to Ill-Water. Belanor accepted his sentence meekly. Leaving the courtroom, he said he had been prepared for this, and expected to enjoy prison life very much.

The reins of mayoral power now pass to Lord Chancellor Arvin Kothonos. The Lord Chancellor has called for a special meeting of the Council of Lords to discuss the situation. This makes the third prominent official struck by controversy since the city was beseiged last winter.

Con Man Poses as Lord Mayor
Forged Deeds Sold to Public

Law enforcement officials warn citizens of a possible threat to property—a confidence scheme involving a man posing as Lord Mayor Charles Oliver O'Kane.

City watch investigators have discovered several instances in which a man closely resembling the missing Lord Mayor appeared in public and bilked Ravens Bluff citizens of coin and magic, under the guise of raising money for the defense of the city.

Chief Constable Rolf "Sunny" Sunriver says that citizens taking reasonable care should be safe, however. "Con men prey on the greedy." says Sunriver, "If a man walks up and offers to sell you a bridge or the Lord Mayor's summer home, then you should be a little suspicious." In addition, Sunriver says that forged deeds and documents sold by the charlatan are easily recognizable: "The forger made an obvious error— the raven's shield in the seal is reversed."

Despite good leads, the city watch has been unable to apprehend a suspect at the present time.

NOTES FROM HQ

A Vision Toward the Future

At this year's Wednesday night membership meeting at the GEN CON® Game Fair, I took the liberty of expressing some thoughts about the Network, and about where I see the Network going in the future. For the benefit of those who didn't have the opportunity to join us at the the Game Fair (and for the benefit of those who'd like to know), I'd like to share those thoughts with you here.

You see, I had that vision when I joined the Network back in 1989, and I still believe that the Network can be the kind of organization I dreamt it was when I first joined.

I envisioned an organization that was based on four fundemental concepts which underrode all of the Network's programs.

Activity—The Network is far more than a Newszine and a membership card.The Network is a hyperactive, fascinated, motivated, determined, and grinning band of friends, always in search of new enthusiasms to add to the mix. This is the Network that recruits its own resources, that makes new friends, that plays every new game, and gets a kick out of watching each other have a rollicking good time.

Service—This is the Network that cares about each of the other members and about the community in which we all live. Members tutor, teach, preach, nanny, build, feed, and lead—while having a great time all the while. Clubs and individual members can take the credit for participation in walk-a-thons, game-a-thons, marathons, and telethons, all to benefit some local or national charity.

Teaching—This is the really motivated Network in action. Members show folks how to play new games; gals and guys beg you to fill that one last seat in that Star Wars or Earthdawn table. Most importantly, this part of the Network represents itself to the community as a viable part, playing games as a worthy pastime, its members as good citizens. This is the Network that advocates role-playing because it's a fun, safe, intellectual hobby which promotes cooperation and human interaction.

Fun—This is the Network that satisfies the needy little child in all of us. We do all kinds of great and exciting things, but we don't mind having a great time while we're doing it. This represents the results of all Network activity: friendship, camaraderie, and enjoyment.

With all of these four tenets in mind, I have proposed my 1997 marketing plan to the folks up here at TSR. Here's what I have in mind: **Activity Centers.** Activity Centers become magnets for Network activity, and promote interaction between members and non-members. We have two basic activity centers now, but in order to provide all members (including internationals) with the opportunity to get full benefit from Network programs we need to create more, and put them fully in the hands of Network members, with coordination from Regional Directors, and from Network HQ. Here's my proposal:

1. **Conventions**—This is one of our existing activity centers. Most of the time resources we have allocated since I became Network Coordinator have been spent on this center, but we still can do more. We're planning a new type of ongoing campaign for introduction this next year. This campign will be distinctive in that all Network members around the world will be able to get these tournaments, and that we'll all be participating in a continuing storyline.

2. **POLYHEDRON Newszine**—This is our other existing activity center. If it hasn't seemed very activity filled lately, then we haven't been doing as good a job as we should. You might have noticed we've been rebuilding the Newszine's look and content from back to front. In the next year we expect to cram all kinds of interactive stuff into the Newszine, especially news relating to gaming around the globe. We have members in over 50 countries, you know.

3. **Retail Stores**—Here's one place where we should be, and haven't been lately. While about 10% of the gaming public goes to conventions, 95% of gamers go to gaming and retail stores. We're firing up a retail program which is intended to provide retailers better sales, while giving Network members a great local place to get involved, and giving clubs opportunities to demonstrate new products for the public.

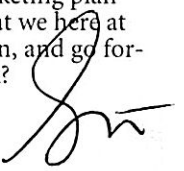
4. **Libraries**—Here's another place we've long had allies, but haven't made ourselves available. I'm no sure how the library program will work yet, but you can expect us to launch the program in late spring of 1997.

5 **Schools**—This is a big leap ladies and gentlemen, and it's not a step to be taken lightly. You don't just walk into a school and start running games. Speaking as a parent and former teacher, I can tell you that schools take their charges very seriously. Schools are very concerned about making sure their students get the best possible eduaction, but these days, they are forced to be even more concerned with making sure the programs they offer are well-accepted and well-founded in educational theory. So we'll keep schools on the back burner for now.

For our American audiences, I should inform you that RPGA UK has been working with public schools for years—in the AD&D National Schools competition. You'll see more about that in coming months.

Well, what do you think? Did I miss anything? Should we be somewhere else? Am I on the right track? One of the members who heard me ask those questions came up to me afterward and let me in on another activity center I'd missed: the Internet.

I slapped my headin recognition, and then redrew my marketing plan appropriately. That's what we here at Network HQ do, we listen, and go forward. What do you think?



A Note From Jeff

Unbeknownst to Scott, I have cleverly hidden his cash card PIN number in this very issue of POLYHEDRON. I had to be subtle, so he wouldn't catch on, but all of you inveterate puzzle solvers should have no problem discovering where I've hidden it. Tee-hee.

I've been tickled like a supine alligator to get such voluminous feedback from people on what they want to see in POLYHEDRON. But in addition to the giddy rush of newness, I sincerely need you to keep telling me what's good and what's not so good. Since responses to my first member survey have been going so well, I want to give people a little more time. I'll report on responses and prize winners next month. If you don't know what I'm talking about, find a copy of POLYHEDRON #121, read the Notes from HQ, and mail (or email) a response to me. Another question next month...